

SMITH'S

FEB., 1917

MAGAZINE

15 CENTS



SERIAL BY ANNE O'HAGAN
NOVELETTE BY GRACE MARGARET GALLAHER
SEVEN SPLENDID SHORT STORIES
HEALTH AND BEAUTY BY DR. WHITNEY

Vol. XXIV

No. 5

SMITH'S MAGAZINE

A PUBLICATION FOR THE HOME

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FOR - FEBRUARY - 1917

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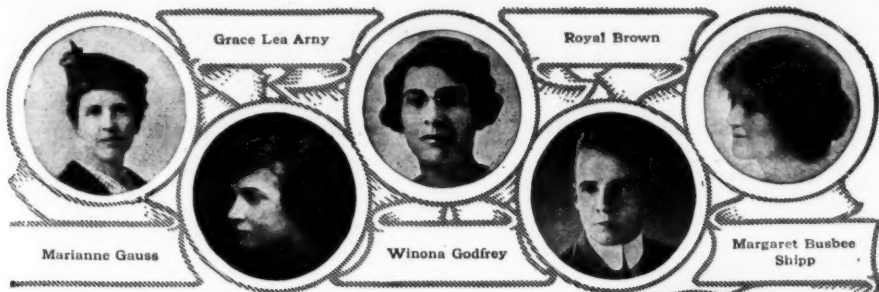
Mary Patterson

TO be always the same and yet to preserve the charm of variety and novelty is one of the most delightful qualities we can ask for in a friend.

WE think that SMITH'S has had this quality in the past. It is well established in its individuality. It is a welcome guest in many of the best homes in America. It has an atmosphere that finds a response from thousands all over the country. It found itself long ago, and its readers know what to expect from it.

IN the coming year, 1917, it will bring an even greater measure of variety and entertainment to its readers than in the past. Its fiction will be stronger, more vital, more varied than ever before; its departments more helpful and interesting. If you glance at the faces and names surrounding these two pages you will discover a few of the people who are helping to make it the best home fiction magazine.

DURING 1917, SMITH'S will run among its serials one by Dane Coolidge, who is new to its pages. Mr. Coolidge writes better stories of the West than almost any one living to-day. His long service as a naturalist in the employ of the United States government, his inborn quality as a story teller, his instinct for striking types of men and women have made his books, "Hidden Water," "Pecos Dalhart," and "Rimrock Jones," most successful. His new novel, "The Gold Rod," to be published serially in SMITH'S, is sure to be talked of for a long time. It is the most unusual story we have ever published. The first installment will appear in the April number.



THE shorter novels, with which each issue of the magazine opens, will picture vividly the many sides of life of interest to American women.

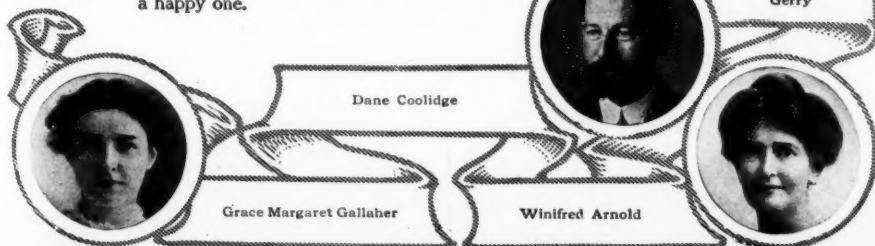
AN absorbing story of the educated and well-bred girl from the country who makes a business success in New York is Bonnie R. Ginger's novel, "The Trail-Taker." Florence Morse Kingsley's "The Right Girl," is a love story with lots of charm and sentiment, but no mawkishness or sentimentality. "The Ancient Bondage," by Anne O'Hagan, is a story of Woman and the New Freedom. Grace Margaret Callaher's novel, "Old Fires That Smoulder," is a really thrilling mystery tale, with its scenes on the historic Eastern Shore of Maryland.

WE mention a few of those whose short stories will appear in 1917, to give you some hint of what you may look forward to:

Burges Johnson, Holman F. Day, Gertrude Pahlow, Kathryn Jarboe, Royal Brown, Winona Godfrey, Evelyn Gill Klahr, Pearl Doles Bell, Bessie R. Hoover, Marianne Gauss, Marion Short, Ruth Herrick Myers, Margarita Spalding Gerry, Nalbro Bartley, Grace Lea Army, Mary Patterson, Winifred Arnold, Anne O'Hagan, Lee Pape, Frances Harmer, and others.

IN addition to the fiction, the new "Stay-At-Home Culture" Department, conducted by D. E. Wheeler, author of "Abraham Lincoln" in the series of "True Stories of Great Americans," and contributor to many encyclopedias and books of reference, will prove itself intimate, helpful, and always interesting. The "Beauty and Health" Department, by Dr. Lillian Whitney, will continue to present in popular form the newest and most authoritative scientific knowledge on a subject of interest to so many women.

SMITH'S will remain the same in that it will still be the ideal home fiction magazine, with nothing in its pages that is not sound, wholesome and sane. It will be different in that its contents for 1917 will be more varied and interesting than ever. We trust it will help a little to make your New Year a happy one.



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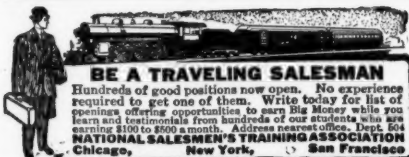
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SMITH'S MAGAZINE

Volume 24

FEBRUARY, 1917

Number 5

The Things That Remain

By Grace Margaret Gallaher

Author of "Peaceful Was the Night," "Strangers in Pettipaug," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY E. C. CASWELL

A story with the freshness of Youth and the Sea told in Miss Gallaher's inimitable way.

CHLOE reached up to the shelf behind the stove.

"It's growin' dark. I'll make a light."

Betsy set her teacup back in her saucer with a nervous hand.

"Oh, I wouldn't. Grandsir won't like it. There's so much light still."

She grew suddenly white and glanced over her shoulder. In the flare of the match, Chloe's eyes glowed lambently.

"If grandsir knows, honey—an' maybe he does—he'll be glad *now* we're takin' comfort with lights an' fires an' all the things he never'd let us have."

Betsy shook her head tremulously.

"I don't know. Oh, I don't know!"

"Well, I do," decisively. "Get your shawl an' run down to the Gull with me. The sunset's a real lovely one to-night."

"Hadn't we ought to do the dishes first?" Her timid smile turned up to her sister.

"Chuck the dishes into the sink or the bay. It don't signify if we never do 'em."

This was heresy too deep to be ignored.

"Why, Chloe Stream, how you talk! We've *got* to do 'em. But I presume we could leave 'em same as we do Sabbath nights."

"Oh, lands, yes! Come on!" Chloe was already out and down the path.

Betsy ran fleetly after her and slipped an arm around her waist. They swung along the beach with the easy gait and even step of those accustomed to walking together through many days. They passed the ragged dunes, mounting slowly with the swell of the land till they stood on a mound whose shape of outstretched neck and wide-spread wings had given it its name, "the Gull." From this height they looked east to the ocean lip-lapping as gently as a lake; west to the bay, a sheet of glassy gold; north to the Light already awink with its great eye; and south to the one reclaimed patch, cupped in behind the dunes, and the low red house, their home. The evening was quiet and cold with the fresh, moist chill that is the first breath of spring.

The sisters looked long at the splendors of the dying day, silent in a comradeship too close to need words. Then Chloe spoke, in her deep voice with the thrill in it.

"Oh, Bet, can't you sense spring comin' up the bay?"

"Days like to-day'll bring out all the little dearie green things fast."

Betsy turned her eyes from the violet and crimson and orange of the skies to the ashes and drabs of her dooryard.

"Oh, it's so sweet!" Chloe's whole body shook with the breath she drew in. Then she laughed. "Don't you reckon grandsir would have called this a weather breeder?"

"He was wise about storms an' rains an' like that," mildly.

"Oh, storms!" as if she scorned knowledge of such evils.

"Don't you view it we'd better be gettin' back, 'fore it's regularly dark?"

"Oh, just a minute more!" pleaded the other. "I love to feel the darkness drift down all around me, soft an' still. You cold? Here!"

She whipped off her shawl and wound it about her sister. Standing on the Gull, high against the sunset, its light clear on their faces, the sisters were like the spirit of the place, its strength and solitude incarnate in their tall figures. They were oddly alike, yet oddly different—Betsy a sketch in delicate water colors, Chloe the same portrait done in vivid oils. Betsy's gray eyes looked out at the world from under her deep, long lashes with tender candor, and her smile asked a smile back in timid trust; but Chloe's eyes, gray and thick-lashed, too, danced and sparkled and hid away from the questioner like some wood creature, dryad or faun, who is half malice and all mischief. Both girls were wonderfully made for speed and power, long-limbed, lithe.

"Not a soul in sight in the whole, wide world," Chloe murmured as her glance swept the sea empty of sails, the land of figures.

"But there's Bay Point lights comin' out."

"Only fifteen miles away, an' you an'

me have never been there but twice in our whole lives!"

"An' just once across the bay inland in the country."

"There's hundreds o' folks across that strip o' water, an' we don't know even the names o' one o' them! We might as well be Robinson Crusoe an' his Man Friday, on a desert island."

"Grandsir deemed it was for the best," soothed her gentler sister.

"He deemed everything was for the best that he wanted to do. If he'd taken it into his head to chop off our hands, 'twould be for the best," in vehement mimicry of some well-known speech.

"The lights are sightly, ain't they?" Betsy wisely dropped this, as all discussions.

Chloe stared across the gray dunes and the darkening water at the string of lights stretched along the sky line. There lay the world, the great mysterious, wonderful world of which she was more ignorant than the dullest schoolgirl living in it. What did they do there, the men and women who dwelt in its fine, large houses, who walked its broad streets? How did they greet one another, and how carry on the intercourse of daily life? In what accents passed between them that mighty secret, the love of a man for a woman?

In these slim, virginal figures stirred that constant hunger of youth to seek its own, to love and be loved. They who had seen nothing, who knew no one, yet felt within them the cry of spirit to spirit.

Betsy twitched her sister's arm.

"We shan't be able to find our way home."

"Forever! I could crawl home blindfolded on my hands an' knees, an' so could you! Come on, ol' fuss-budge." Chloe spun her sister around and pulled her down the hill at a plunging run.

The ocean and beach were dark; only a saffron bar of light lingered in the west. The sea broke at their feet in light runnels of foam, its restless voice calmed to a whisper. Away off up the coast a bell tolled in faint, regular moans.

"Ol' Tom's callin'. Must be gettin' thick to no'ward."

Old Tom was the bell at Thomas Reef.

"My crocuses have just poked up their noses. I do hope we shan't have a storm," Betsy grieved.

"Don't fret. It's too late for any more big storms." Chloe's eyes were on the soft blackness of the sky, pricked through, here and there, by a pale star.

"I wish I hadn't turned out the light," Betsy said, as they climbed over the dunes. "A dark house is always kind o' creepy to go into."

"Oh, shucks!" her valiant sister retorted upon her.

Flinging her shawl from her, Chloe ran flying into the kitchen, where instantly a light flamed out. When Betsy entered, the curtains were drawn, the room full of a cheerful shine.

"Ain't it a snug place?"

Betsy smiled upon the room with its white curtains, polished stove, and flowers blooming in pots.

"Don't you wish it faced the ocean? Wasn't it grandsir all over to build a room right across the front o' the house an' then shut it up tight, so nobody could take any comfort in it?"

"He was raised upcountry, where folks have a keepin' room for company."

"Don't tell me! I vow I know how 'twas! Grandma wanted to take her pleasure in a room where she could look out on the water, an' as soon as grandsir found that out, he wouldn't let her."

"Chloe Stream, you stop speakin' hard o' them that are gone."

"I'm goin' to tell the truth about grandsir now, same as I did when he was here. I put a good few o' my ideas before him while he was here, if you'll remember."

"My soul, yes!" Betsy trembled at the memory. "Dear, he meant to do right."

"He meant to have his own way in every blamed thing in this house an' garden, an' he got it, too, though I made him fight for it sometimes. Don't say another word!" She began to clear the table in great sweeps.

The dishes washed, the sisters sat down on either side of the lamp, Chloe with an old skirt to mend, Betsy with a roll of edging she was knitting. They did not speak at all, but every now and then glanced across at each other with a smile warm with love.

Half a century before, Saul Nevitt, an upcountry young farmer, irked by the narrow things of home, had brought his bride down to one of the most barren and most lonely coasts on the Atlantic Ocean. He had just been appointed keeper of the Light, and he had gone to work to build a house, low and deep set against storms, and to plant a garden in the only fertile land for miles around. Between the hours over at the Light, he had toiled heavily at the work to which he had been raised, and the farm had thriven. He had added chickens, ducks, pigs, and a cow. Soon he had raised all he needed for his own use.

Nevitt himself had never grieved for a change of round, or for comrades. He had gone up to the cluster of fishermen's cabins that formed the village, five miles away, only to get necessary supplies. He had never inquired if his wife, a village-bred girl, was happy in their utter isolation. She had not had long to endure it, for at the end of a year, one wild and bitter night, she had become the mother of a baby girl and died within an hour.



Chloe smiled at him, but Betsy said with sweetness: "I wish you could set a while, Mat."

Saul had sent for his widowed sister to rear his baby and mind his house. At the same time, the government had sent him an assistant for the Light, a lad of sixteen, Nathaniel Stream.

When the baby had been nine, the aunt had died. After that, the two men and the child had managed to fend for themselves.

Betsy and Chloe had never been able to learn much of their mother. A crudely colored picture of her hung in their grandfather's bedroom, a demure young girl with Betsy's pure coloring, but Chloe's will-o'-the-wisp eyes. Old Saul, who sometimes could be questioned about their father, would never speak of their mother; his grief at her loss had been too great. When she had been seventeen, she had married Nathaniel Stream, he being thirty-three. When Betsy had been two and Chloe a few months old, their mother—only twenty herself—had died suddenly and been buried up in the hill country

where her children had never been. The next year their father had been drowned rescuing some sailors on a foundering bark.

Another woman relative had been brought down to the coast to care for the babies. She had been a dim creature, whose death, five years before, had caused the girls no real grief. The girls had served their tyrannical old grandfather from that time until his death.

He had been a terrible old man—a bully, a miser, and a Pharisee—and he would have crushed the souls out of any young creatures less sweet and brave than his granddaughters. They had feared him, they had respected him—for some iron virtues had certainly been his—but their best efforts could not make them love him.

He had died in an instant, still hale and robust, a month ago. The farm and all the savings of a grinding life were theirs to do with as they wished.

They were free to go anywhere, yet they had been living on after exactly the pattern of all their years, like a bird in a cage when its door is suddenly opened, too startled and timid of liberty to fly away. The government had appointed their grandfather's assistant, Matthew Jewett, head keeper of the Light and would send him an assistant soon. He took his meals with them, just as he had done for the last ten years.

A shutter banged and a window rattled.

"Wind's kickin' up." Chloe laid down her mending.

"Colder, too. Can't you feel it?"

"I guess the fire's low. Here's Mat."

The door opened without a knock and a man entered, bringing with him a blast of keen air. Brownie, the collicie, leaped on him joyously, and the sisters smiled up at him as on a good friend. He nodded, smiling, too, and began to shake up the fire. Then he filled the coal buckets, brought water from the well, and piled more kindling in the box. At the door, he turned and looked about the warm, homely room.

"Kind o' pleasant in here." He had a deep, quiet voice.

Chloe smiled at him with the feeling he always gave her, a sense of security and well-being; but Betsy said with sweetness:

"I wish you could set a while, Mat."

"Glass 's goin' down," as if that were an answer.

"You don't deem a big storm's on the way—an' my crocuses just out—do you?" Betsy clasped her hands as if the Light keeper held the storm in the hollow of his.

The man's smile spread up into his eyes—rather sad eyes they were—cracking his weather-beaten face into deep creases.

"Oh, I guess not as bad as that. Good night."

"Good night," chorused the others.

"Isn't Mat a real clever, good fellow to do all our chores?" Chloe exclaimed, as she got out the bread bowl to set a sponge for the next day.

"Why, of course he is." Betsy wondered, over the rug she was laying out for Brownie, why that idea should occur to Chloe just to-night. "What makes you think of it *now*?"

"Oh, I don't know," indifferently. "I'd love to see one more great crashin' gale before summer."

"Oh, Chloe, the wrecks!" shuddered the other.

"Sometimes there aren't any wrecks," persisted her sister.

"I guess I'll heat us a flat." Betsy set an iron on the stove.

In a few minutes the last little odds and ends of the day were wound up and the sisters climbed the stairs to bed. Their room was a kind of half attic, running across the entire house, so low that only in the middle could they stand upright in it. It was sealed and plastered and humming with warmth from a drum from the kitchen stove. From the rafters hung bunches of dried herbs—sweet fern, bayberry, and yarrow, making the air pungent with their balm—and bags of tackle, loops of nets, and other gear not usual in my lady's chamber. At each end, a window opened out like a lattice.

Each sister had her own special side of this room, but they curled down together into a great four-poster under a rising-sun bedquilt.

Betsy began to undress with a slow precision that wasted no motions. Chloe flung herself on the floor by the eastern window and, opening it, leaned out into the black night.

"The sea's gettin' up, too," she said.

"You'll catch cold there."

A spot of light danced along the beach.

"Judd Riggett's started on his beat. I can always tell him by his lantern. Wonder why he always takes it!"

"Government 'lows the life-savin' men to carry 'em if they want."

"None o' the others do."

"Oh, it's just his notion." Betsy dismissed the eccentric Judd and snuggled down into bed.

"If I was a man, I'd be a life-saver," Chloe announced from the darkness of the other end of the room.

"Last I heard 'twas a sailor."

"That's a grand life, too. But a life-saver's a greater man yet. Just to think o' ol' Cap'n Thumble, saved two hundred an' forty human bein's durin' his thirty years at the station, with his own hands!"

"An' ended up marryin' an awful wicked ol' woman that was somebody else's wife."

"What if he did? What's that when a man has kept from death over two hundred livin' souls? He'd have to marry two hundred an' forty wives o' other men to even that up. You sound like grandsir!"

A murmured "Goodness!" was Betsy's only comment.

"Oh, Bet, ain't you happy you were born out here by the great, free, open ocean 'stead o' in a town?"

"I prize the country best, dear. You mind the time grandsir took us inland, beyond Bay Point?"

"Of course. I'm only two years younger than you."

"Wasn't it a sightly land—the green meadows stretchin' out for miles an' the sleek cattle grazin' in 'em?"

"Awful thirsty place, I called it. What ails the Light?"

"Mat said one o' the valves ain't openin' right. He's goin' to sail up to Bay Point to-morrow to tell government about it."

"Ain't you glad Mat got grandsir's place?"

"Why, yes, of course. Was there any talk he wouldn't?"

"You never can tell what government'll do." The sisters always spoke

of Congress and the president as if they were dark powers whose orbits no man could plot. "I wonder what the assistant will be like?"

"Are you *ever* comin' to bed?" Betsy was stung to fierceness by the prick of sleep.

"Two an' a half to the bush house, an' two an' a half back, an hour down an' an hour back, night in, night out. Queer!"

Betsy knew her mind was following the life-savers, who—alone on fair nights, in pairs on stormy ones—passed the house on their beat, between sunset and sunrise. She turned over with resignation to go to sleep. In a bound, Chloe was beside her, curled up close.

"My, ain't bed good?" Her lips were on Betsy's soft cheek.

Once in the night Chloe woke with a deep start. The sea was plunging on the sand with a steady boom, the wind screamed past the open window, and the rain slashed against the roof.

"We're in for somethin' big," she whispered to her sleeping partner and crept down farther into her warm nest.

"My soul an' body! Get up an' see what's happened!" Betsy, from the window, thrilled to Chloe.

With a leap Chloe was at the window, too.

"A blizzard! It's an April fool!"

The ground was deep in snow; the side of the barn was hung with a curtain of white; flakes in thick clouds rushed by on the roaring wind. Last night's tranquil ocean hurled itself landward in mountains of surf that broke in cataracts of foam.

"A nor'easter. That'll keep the sea off the house." All her life, Betsy's inland soul had trembled for the farmstead in the hollow of the dunes.

The kitchen was cold and gray. Betsy stirred the fire to royal heat, while Chloe cooked a meal of astounding size.

"You lookin' to have the crew in to breakfast?" her sister asked mildly, as she watched the ham and eggs sputter in the pan.

"Don't you be grandsir, countin' every grain o' sugar. We got to have plenty o' fuel to keep our fires up. Mornin', Mat!"

Matthew Jewett shook his oilers and sou'wester against the door and seated himself at the table in his customary pleasant silence. No one could accuse the Light keeper of wasting words.

Chloe piled his plate with ham, eggs, and corn muffins.

"How's the glass?" Betsy handed him a cup of coffee as big as a bowl.

He gestured toward the floor.

"Goin' down *still*!" Chloe flew to the window to watch a monster wave climb skyward, totter, fall crashing on the beach.

Mat took up the coal buckets.

"I'll feed the creatures. You girls stay by the house." His voice was beautifully soft, a strange one to come from a man, plain and of no significance of appearance.

"I'm goin' out in it!" Chloe was tugging on her grandfather's oilers.

"Don't go out!" begged Betsy.

"Better not. If you go again' the wind, you won't gain a step; if you go with it, likely it'll push you over." Mat looked at her with a kind of pleading steadiness.

"Grandsir never let you go," Betsy urged.

"That's why I'm a-goin' now."

Without another word, Mat opened the door to the gale.

In half an hour, Chloe stumbled in, her cheeks whipped crimson by the sand, her breath gulping in her throat.

"Good fathers! Bet, it's like the gale when the *James C. Weir* foundered in front o' our door!"

"It's an awful rough day."

"Want to try it?" Chloe extended the dripping oilers to her.

"No, sir! I shan't move from this house unless I'm driven."

All day the sisters fed their hungry fire and watched the passion of the wind and the sea. The air and land were pale drab, a mixture of snow and sand; the sea and sky were pale gray; nowhere was there any dash of color, or spark of glitter; the whole world was shrouded in unearthly half tones like some strange Japanese painting, colorless, sketched in with a few faint lines. Across the narrow strip of land behind the house, the bay raged as if it had been the ocean. Now and then a train on the new road along the bay thundered by. It never stopped, yet its presence linked the farm to the great world the sisters had never seen and lightened a little the sense of profound loneliness.

Mat came in at noon, ate a gigantic dinner, and told them the Light engine was running poorly. He'd take his supper with him and not be back till morning. The sisters looked a startled question at each other. They had never weathered a storm alone, for Mat or their grandfather had always slept in the house.

"Never mind, pussy." Chloe smiled valiantly. "The ol' girl shakes like a rattle, but she's built low an' solid. She won't lose her head in a gale."

"The wind makes one sorrowful. It tells me all the time 'bout wrecked ships an' dead men washed about in the waves." Betsy bent low over her knitting.

"I'm glad father's asleep in Pleasant Valley graveyard, out o' sound o' th' sea." Chloe whispered it.

"Don't you wish we could see his grave an' mother's?" Betsy whispered back.

The sisters rarely spoke of their parents; their names deepened the sense of their kinless state.

Chloe jumped up briskly.

"I'm a-goin' to bake us hot biscuits

for supper an' get out some o' the fruit cake an' peach preserves. We'll have a real company meal. Then let's pop us corn an' make corn balls."

They sat close by their bright stove, shaking the corn popper over the fire, while the house swung like a boat, the snow seeped in under the doors, and the wind swooped past the walls in roaring blasts. Above all other sounds beat the boom of the sea, unceasing, thunderous. The blasts of snow and sand thickened the clear shaft of gold from the Light to a haze of orange. Again and again one or the other pressed her face to the window to report:

"She's all right still."

At nine o'clock Betsy wound the clock and did the usual last tasks.

"I'm not goin' to bed any such rough night as this," pronounced her sister strongly.

"Afraid, dear?"

"No, I'm not, but a storm like this don't strike the coast not more'n once in a lifetime. I'm not a-goin' to let it go by an' me in bed." Chloe had a feeling for the dramatic values. She flitted over to the window. "My soul! Somethin' wrong with her; for sure!"

Betsy's face was close to hers against the pane.

"The engine's broken down. He's turnin' her by hand."

"How you know?"

"Don't you remember, years ago, when it acted so for grandsir, an' he an' Joe Tait, that was assistant then, took watch turn about all night makin' her go?"

"Why, yes, I do call it home now, kind o' misty. But, sis, Mat can't keep a-turnin' all night!"

"He's got to. Why, the Light would stop!"

The tradition of fealty to a service, deep in the blood of so many simple natures, that has made heroes of lowly men and women beat in those words.

Chloe looked at her with eyes shining big and dark.

"I know!" she cried, and in a flash was into her oiler and sou'wester.

"What you goin' to do?" gasped Betsy.

"Help him turn." Chloe's face was all aglow with mischievous purpose. "You shake down the fire an' fix the lamp an' come 'long, too. I can't wait." With a bang she was out into the storm.

She ducked her head against the wind and dove into the heart of the gale. Her blood leaped; her nerves tightened; she fought like a swimmer in a powerful current. The wind tore at her coat to pluck it off her, clutched at her feet to jerk them out from under her, slapped her savagely in the face. Active and tough as any lad, she beat her way against it, across the scant quarter of a mile to the Light, and, blinded, breathless, exhausted, staggered into the tower and fell into a chair.

The Light was a flash, two beams, pause, two beams. The machinery that worked it was in the top story just under the Light itself. The first floor had a little office and kitchen; the other two floors had a bedroom each.

Chloe dragged off her coat and cap, and slowly, like a weary old woman, began to plod up the long iron spirals that wound into the darkness. Something urged her on to waste no time. The scene on the top platform was just as she had pictured it—the big Light, true to its task, flashing, darkening, only a little slower, a little less steady, than on other nights; the motionless engine; and Mat, with set lips and drawn face, turning the crank of the auxiliary engine.

He smiled at Chloe.

"Knew you'd come. Ain't this just the night for the ol' girl to cash in?"

"Turn hard?"

"George, no! Just awful kind o' monotonous."

"Let me!"

Without a word, he slid his hand off the crank as she slid hers on. The iron handle ran around smoothly in her grip. There was no weight to lift or resistance to force back; it seemed simple. Yet presently Chloe's round, muscular arm numbed, stiffened, jarred, ached intolerably. She shifted off to her left arm. That stood less strain. She looked over at Mat, seated on the floor, his head against the wall, his eyes closed. He had been doing that maybe two hours. She shut her own eyes and whirled and whirled the bar.

"Change!" Mat's voice was in her ear, tranquil and steady. "Where's Betsy?"

"Comin'." Where, indeed, was Betsy? Three was a better number than two to spell.

She stared out over the wild waste of water foaming white under the great flash. God send all ships far from that shore! Then she looked back into the tower, glaring in the radiance, and up to Mat, who, with a sober, intent look, was turning, turning.

"My, I'm glad I came!"

Mat nodded smilingly. He had no power to waste.

Chloe studied him shrewdly. The glare caught him at a cruel disadvantage, showing up every wrinkle in his weather-beaten face, every twist of his irregular features.

"Mat's homely as a hedge fence," the girl told herself, "an' those big



A roaring blast seized them, spun them around, and herded them like sheep down the shore.

shoulders an' long arms o' his certainly do look ungainly, but he's got an' awful sweet, *good* sort o' a smile, an' his eyes are just as true as the Light."

She dropped her gaze again upon the desolate ocean and, sailor-hearted though she was, she shuddered.

"The sea is cruel!"

"You'll get cold!" Mat had to speak strongly above the jar of the engine and the roar of the storm. "My jersey's down in the office. An' light the lamp to boil some coffee."

"Next turn," Chloe called back to him.

She stood up to take the handle from him. Her next spell off, she lighted the spirit lamp in the kitchen and set the coffee on, and the next brought it up to him.

"Where's Betsy?" he asked, as he

drank the steaming brew, black and bracing.

"Wish I knew!"

She puckered her fine brows at him. Could she have started and been blown back? That wasn't Bet! Could she have been beaten out of the trail away off somewhere in the dunes? Wherever she was, or whatever had happened to her, Chloe could not leave her post to find out. She must turn, steady as Mat himself, for on the Light might hang the lives of a whole ship's crew.

She hated the dull, safe swag of the crank, over—back, over—back. Oh, to be out there battling in the foam and spume and seethe of it, every drop in her body fighting for her! This took no fire and flame and dash, just dour doggedness. She flung up her free hand in a gesture of scorn.

How made for it Mat was—slow, strong, stolid! He could turn that maddening handle till he died and never once jerk it with irritation. Yet he was manly, too, the way he stood to it, his trick double hers, unflinchingly.

"Glad I came?" Her fingers touched his as they changed off.

"I knew you would," in his of-course way.

"Why not Bet?"

"No," but he would not explain.

The night crept along, each hour iron-footed. At long spaces, Mat spoke.

"Tired?"

"No."

"Don't fret you about Betsy."

"No."

Once he said: "You're all beat out. You go sleep. It's only two hours to sunup now."

Then, indeed, she tore herself up from the abyss of sleep into which she was sliding and flung herself upon the crank.

"I can stick it out as long as you."

Mat did not answer. His face was gray and sweat-dewed, but somewhere

he found a smile to give her. The storm yelled itself into a frenzy of passion, then, like a wild beast that has worn itself out by its own violence, gasped and groaned and shuddered gradually into quiet. The Sabbath sun thrust his glittering sword through the thin clouds flying before him.

Chloe and Mat stared at each other like sleepwalkers. Her dark, soft hair clung in damp rings to her forehead; her cheeks were deep scarlet; her eyes wildly bright. The man was haggard-eyed and gray. He reached a hard hand across to her.

"Good night's work!" she cried, in her eager, weary voice.

"You go home to bed. I'll go blaze up your fire."

He covered the lamp for the day and together, under the spring sun, they went through the shining snow.

All Chloe's worries, drugged by work, crawled back over her.

"Don't you think it's dreadful queer 'bout Bet? Why—why—hear Brownie bark!"

She started forward at a run. Mat was before her. He flung open the door upon a cold and empty kitchen.

"Betsy! Bet!" he shouted.

Only the whines of the collie answered him.

Chloe-stumbled up the steps behind him.

"What's that on the floor?" Her quick woman's eyes were on a trail of red across the clean pine. "Blood?"

She darted about the room.

"What's all that white cloth an' the alcohol bottle an' the whisky flask?" In a whirl she was upon the man. "Matthew Jewett, you tell me where's my sister?" she shrieked, her hands clenched in his face.

Mat caught both her fists in his.

"I don't know yet, Chloe, but I'm goin' to find out. But first I'm goin' to blaze up some fire an' get us both a dight o' breakfast."

"You think for one moment I'm a-goin' to wait for breakfast when my only, darlin' sister——"

Mat seated her on the old lounge by the stove. She was conscious how strong he was and how gentle.

"You lie there an' rest. You're too beat out to work, an' so am I, till we get somethin' inside o' us."

"I won't!"

Her big, burning eyes and his small, cool ones met, held, and battled. Chloe's head sank on the pillow.

"Be quick, won't you?" she murmured, two little pitiful tears creeping from her closed lids.

The man's heavy hand twitched forward as if he would lay it on her cheek; then he began to rattle up the fire with steady speed.

When the door closed on Chloe, Betsy stared after her with round eyes. Her desire was to run after her sister instantly. But Betsy Stream never did anything instantly; all the flash belonged to Chloe.

"Ain't she a fly-up-the-crick?" she murmured, rising with her slow and graceful strength.

She filled the teakettle for morning, moved the kindling close to the stove, and made all preparations for a quick breakfast. Then she looked about for Brownie, to tuck him into his box by the stove.

The dog was snuffing at the door, the bristles on his neck rising slowly.

"What does he hear that I don't?" thought the girl, with a sudden clutch of fear at her heart.

"Come, Brown, lie down!"

Brownie growled low in his throat. Now Betsy could hear, herself, shuffling sounds in the snow. Not Mat—he was at the Light. Not Chloe—she could not be there and back so quickly. She looked around the room in a wild tremor.

Then the iron in the veins of old

Saul stiffened her thinner blood. She gripped Brownie's collar with her left hand and clutched the hatchet in the other.

"Come in!" Her voice was clear and strong.

Fingers fumbled at the latch.

"Come in."

A voice muttered weakly: "Help!"

The door swayed open. A man staggered in, looked at her with swimming eyes, and fell all in a bundle into a chair, his head dropping forward on the table.

Betsy laid down the hatchet.

"Down, Brown!" she quieted the dog.

With quick movements she pulled off the man's oilers and sou'wester, opened his jersey, and pulled at the throat of his jacket. He wore the canvas jumper of a life-saver, and on his left breast was the number 16.

"One o' our men, but I never saw him before," she said aloud.

The man, whose body, pushed back by her movement, hung sideways against her, opened his eyes.

"All—right——" vaguely. "Your room's—hot——"

With his hat gone, she saw that his hair was matted with blood, which was also smeared over his forehead. A dark stain, like a bruise, colored one cheek. Betsy brought warm water, bathed his face and head, and hunted with gently groping fingers for the cut, all as naturally as she would have done for Mat. But now the man spoke again:

"Got any—whisky—or—like—that?"

His voice frightened her, although it was soft and musical like none that she had ever heard. It seemed to make him strange and terrible. She backed away, the basin shaking in her hand.

"Don't be frightened. I'm a—life-saver—not—a—tramp."

Then he smiled, and his poor, blood-smirched, battered face was irradiated with wonderful light and sweetness.

Betsy knew that the voice and the smile could not belong to just a man—like Mat—or grandsir.

"Get—me—a drink," he begged, in his voice of liquid gold. "I got to go on."

"You hurt you," falteringly.

"A little." He raised himself to his feet, rocked, and dropped back, his eyes shut, his mouth falling slack.

She ran for her grandfather's flask and poured some of the raw spirits down his throat.

Again he smiled at her, and a flicker of red stained his cheeks.

"If you'll let me, I'll fix your head," she trembled out.

"Thank you, dear lady."

Betsy blushed a pretty rose all over her soft, fair face. Who ever spoke like that? She found old linen and a bottle of alcohol and washed the cut, drawing the edges together neatly and covering them with plaster. The man's hair was very light, almost gold, and thick and curly like a child's, but his eyes and lashes were black, like a mysterious, soft night. He was fairer than she herself, with no touch of the weather on his thin cheeks, and his features were straight and beautifully cut. The girl had never imagined a man like this.

"If you'd lie down on the lounge, you could rest you easier," she urged softly, when his head was bandaged.

"I got to go on."

"You can't. Why, you've 'most fainted twice."

"Nevertheless——" His flashing smile finished for him.

"Is it your patrol? You come from Station No. 16, don't you? When did you start?"

"God knows," simply. "It's my first night in the service."

"Cap'n Tillson oughtn't to have sent you on patrol a night like this."

"He didn't mean to. But one of the men he sent out hasn't come back.

There's a wreck—a fisherman—up by the station, so I am all he could spare. I must find that man."

"But you're hurt," again.

"Only a little. That man—Joe—may be drowned or frozen—or——"

"It's not cold enough for that."

"I must go for him," gently.

"Likely Joe's in the bush house."

"Bush house?"

"Halfway between the two stations—No. 16, yours, an' No. 17—there's a hut with a light in it burnin' all night. You go there, leave a check of brass, get the check from the man from No. 17, an' go back to No. 16 with it. Then your cap'n knows you've patrolled your line of beach."

"I know. They told me," he murmured. "I'll hunt Joe there."

"Listen! You can't! You're all wore out. You'll die!"

"Perhaps." He said it easily, gayly.

"Now, you listen." He reached for the whisky and drank again; his hand was long and shapely, whiter than a sailor's. "I have been everything—sailor, secretary, farmer, clerk, diver, banker. At none of those things have I been anything. For why? I have brains and strength like other men. I liked my pleasure too well. I idled; I took my ease; I was happy. You see? My good friend has always found me another place, and another place, but this is the last. If I fail here—— I must do well! Isn't that so?"

Betsy listened like a child to a tale of fairy. She had known to talk with in all her life just four men—her grandfather, Cap'n Tillson, the old minister up at the church five miles away, and Mat. She had never read a romance in her life. Therefore, she had no one real or in a book to whom she might compare this strange, wonderful being who talked straight out about himself as if they had been friends for years.

"Are you—an American?" she faltered, for some sweet and elusive sound

in his voice, or perhaps his clear accent, was unlike any speech she knew.

"David Talbot, of the State of Maine." He laughed—a sound like running water. "But my mother—she was a Greek, from one of the beautiful isles. You hear her in me." He took her hand, hanging loose before her, and held it between both of his. "You have been kind like a sister to me. If I don't get back, you tell them I tried——"

"Don't go!"

It sprang from her in a cry. This bright, marvelous creature must not go out into the black and furious void. She could not bear it.

He stood up tall and slim and straight, and Betsy thought of her sister Chloe.

"Good night!" His voice lingered tenderly.

Entire madness swept Betsy out into a sea as wild as any raging below her home. She could not have put a name to the tide that lifted her; only she knew that night and darkness and storm were whelmed in the terror of losing this stranger, of seeing him go out from her forever; more, even, all thoughts of modesty and "conduct" were drowned in the "waters of the wondrous well." Yet—since often the form persists when the vital spirit within is quenched—she said, quite sedately:

"Then I am goin', too."

"You can't! In this storm!"

She drew quite close to him, as tall and strong in her way as he in his.

"I know this coast like I do the palm o' my hand. You don't. I can find the trail an' help you along in it, down to the bush house. Then on—if we have to go."

The stranger's liquid eyes glowed with soft fires.

"With you I could do it!" The flame died. "But your father, brother——"

"Nobody's here; just me. Come on."

She was into her coat and reaching for her sou'wester.

Her hair lay silky smooth on either side of her broad, low forehead; her gray eyes were mildly expectant; her whole fair, sweet self seemed about to step out on the beach for a summer's saunter. How could he know that she had flung herself into the great deep, to sink or swim as the mighty gods decreed?

They took hold of hands like children and stepped out into the storm. A roaring blast seized them, spun them around, and herded them like sheep down the shore.

"Good the wind's behind us!" she called to him.

"Wh-at?"

They made no further trial of speech. Slowly, straining back, like horses on a downhill, they kept ahead of the wind that fought to send them scudding into the ocean or beat them flat on their faces. Every few minutes they rested, leaning their backs against the gale as if it had been a barn door; and always they clasped hands tight.

"Look!" Betsy pulled herself to him and shrieked into his face. "The bush-house light!"

They let themselves go now and went scudding free before the wind toward their port.

The girl felt something smooth and sharp beneath her feet, kicked at it, found it solid and extended; yet she drew her comrade on toward the spark of red.

"Oh!" the cry came from them at once.

"What is it?" shouted the man.

"The red light set for trains, on the track. We're half a mile out o' our course."

They started again. And now the wind was aslant their long tack. Betsy drew her arm in through the stranger's. When he swayed, she held him up. When he lagged, she pulled him on.

The cold was not severe. But the sand and snow whipped their faces ceaselessly; the wind beat upon them like some heavy garment that would muffle them in thick folds; and always the thunder of the sea stunned their senses. Now they seemed to be hurling themselves in the very eye of the wind; then their bursting lungs eased of their strain, and they felt the solid wall of force between them, and flew before it once more.

"There! There!" This time it was David who sighted the tiny point of red.

Pitching along through the sand, they reached it. It was the train signal again!

Betsy's fine heart quailed. Out on this night with a man who had never even once patrolled the coast, the compass in her own brain broken! She pushed herself up very close to David.

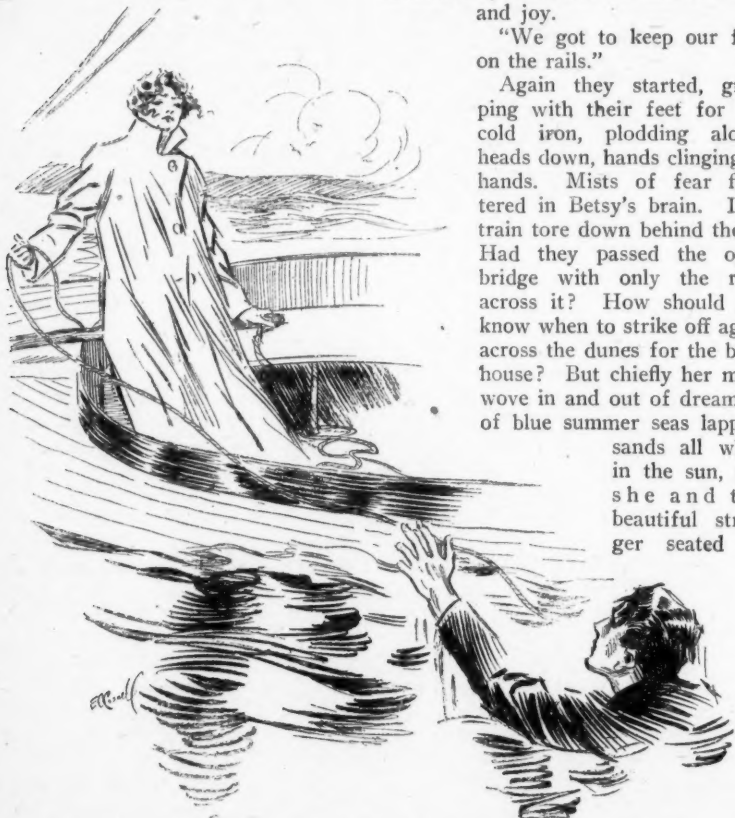
"Tired?"

"Not a bit." The words sobbed from his laboring throat.

In the black night she could see him as she had in her little warm kitchen, brilliant-eyed, smiling, in spite of his bloodstains, a creature of fire and life and joy.

"We got to keep our feet on the rails."

Again they started, gripping with their feet for the cold iron, plodding along, heads down, hands clinging to hands. Mists of fear fluttered in Betsy's brain. If a train tore down behind them! Had they passed the open bridge with only the rails across it? How should she know when to strike off again across the dunes for the bush house? But chiefly her mind wove in and out of dreams—of blue summer seas lapping sands all white in the sun, and she and the beautiful stranger seated on



Lyne leaped for the rope, missed it, and sank 'way under from his effort.

them; or of smooth green hills, flower sweet, where a silver river bubbled over stones, and she and he plaited wreaths close to its margin.

The rails beneath her feet trembled queerly. She woke out of her dream, sprang to one side, and jerked David violently along with her. They both fell headlong and rolled together in the snow and sand. Above them, the midnight express shot by, its shriek cutting through sea and wind. Wordless, they staggered up, and since they were started thus, plowed on that way. Betsy had long ago ceased to plan, to dream, even to feel. Some whirl of her machinery, not yet run down, kept her feet lifting; settling, lifting, settling unwaveringly.

Something twisted her arm; her leaded eyes opened. A red spark! This was the bush house at last. They fell upon its rough floor and lay like dead bodies.

Presently Betsy stirred, crept to her knees, then to the wall. Under the lantern's glow, she saw the brass check, No. 16, and the hour the life-saver had started from the station stamped on it. Joe had left his check, got the one from No. 17, and gone on—where? She leaned her weary head against the wall and sighed. They were safe at last, with stout walls to keep out wind and rain, even a kind of warmth. Why hadn't Joe "seen" enough to stay, too?

David dragged himself over beside her.

"This is comfort!" he murmured, his voice faint as a breath.

They sat hand in hand, not speaking, not thinking, resting from intolerable fatigue.

David gave a long stretch of all his body.

"I've got to find Joe!"

What was the use protesting? Betsy strained her aching body to her feet, and they went out together.

The sea boomed hollowly, but the

wind no longer scourged them back; rather it pushed them with rough kindness. Once, in the flying scud, Betsy thought she glimpsed a star.

Ahead, a light burned and, like creatures far done, they toiled to it, fell, rose, stumbled, fell again, rose again, dropped, and made the last yards on hands and knees.

"Noah's Ark!" cried Uncle Jethro Upsill, fisherman, in his own hut on the beach, much given to Bible readings and strange oaths. "Lifers, an'—as I'm a professin' Christian!—one o' the Stream girls! Crawl in, crawl in. I got Joe Bunce here a'ready. He's thawed out, an' I'll proceed to operate on you."

The day was sweet and still and veiled. The sun, the line of the horizon, the ships at sea, even the tall white Light, were veiled in rose-amber mist. Five people sat on the beach—three men mending fishlines, two women knitting fish nets. One of the men worked with a kind of Oriental patience, never hurrying his task, never ceasing in it. One twisted and cut with extraordinary swiftness, then dropped his tools to look out over the opalescent sea or to play with the sand. He was always behind. The third, a lanky boy, occasionally left everything to run up to the Light.

"Reckon Charles Henry views it the Light's goin' to swim out to sea if he don't ca'm it down ever so often," remarked Mat, for an instant looking up from his work.

David Talbot flung back his head and laughed, happily, beautifully, as only the South of Europe can.

"He's some interested in his job," he answered.

Charles Henry was the three-days-old assistant to the Light.

"Could anybody dream this shore was all hacked to pieces by a gale just a week ago to-day?" Chloe swept her

knitting wide around the peaceful scene.

"There's Uncle Jethro comin' up the beach. Oh, Mat, you ever forget the way his eyes ran around when you an' me burst in on him that mornin'? 'More couples a-comin' in! Should think I was the minister!'"

She laughed with whole-hearted frankness, but over Betsy's face the red rushed in a tide.

"Afternoon, ladies an' gents," the old fisherman saluted them. "How you-all makin' out to-day?"

"Nicely, thank you."

"All right."

"Bully, cap'n."

Three of them answered according to their nature. Betsy alone knit very fast in silence.

"How's our young friend, here, of the battered figurehead?"

David laughed—laughter came as easily to him as breathing to other people—rumbled his curls till a lean red scar showed beneath them, and turned his cheek where the heavy bruise was fading to a pale green.

"Mighty good doctor patched me up."

His fine hand gestured toward Betsy.

Again her cheeks burned.

"Eighty-five mile an hour she blew that night. 'Minded me o' the storm when the *Abner H. Carey* came ashore," reminisced the ancient. "The wind was a howlin' gale right out o' the north, and——"

His droning voice was lost to Betsy. Her thoughts were flying away on clouds as shining white as any of a summer's day. This was her birthday. She was twenty-three.

"Mother was six years wedded when she was my age!" she had told her sister, as they had dressed that morning. She had felt very old and responsible and equal to life.

And then all her calm had been fluttered by David. He had brought her a present—a curious and lovely chain,

of some strange Oriental shell, milk-white surfaces with hearts of burning greens and blues and violets, like snow-kissed opals.

"It was my mother's," he told her, for an instant pressing it to his cheek, "and it will make me—oh, very, very happy, if you will wear it for your birthday, and for me, and—for her."

Betsy had never had a present in her life. Old Saul had viewed such as "shaller conduct," unbecoming a wayfarer on the great highroad to Judgment Day. She had carried the necklace in her pocket all day, slipping her fingers in to stroke the smooth surfaces. Such a beautiful thing to belong to her! And from David! Every time she touched her gift, her heart leaped like a fish in a pool.

She watched the tall, graceful stranger, now on his feet, telling a tale of adventure in the South Seas, fire running quick through all the channels of his body, leaping into flame in his smile, his eyes; she listened to his soft, swift voice, with its musical cadence; and her whole childlike, unaroused nature awoke to him with a thrill that shivered in every corner of her soul. When he finished, she could not have spoken to save herself. It was Chloe who asked in a matter-of-course way:

"Who you say was the man who saved your life?"

"John Ferrand. He's the best friend I ever had. He's back in the States now. It was he that got me this place."

"I guess you're grateful to him. My, that was interestin'!" Chloe paid her tribute to his powers frankly.

Betsy could only look at him with all her heart in her eyes, yet some strain of old grandsir's shrewdness showed her that, for all his young enthusiasm, he was no gasconader; he told this not of himself, but of the elderly man, his friend. And she remembered that wild,

storm-lashed night and his smiling defiance of it to find Joe. A luminous glow spread over her face as if the colors of the sunset were in her heart.

David ended his story with a gesture that swept the sky.

"That's him, John Ferrand, and me—David Talbot. My hour of leave's up. I got to go."

Betsy shook out her net.

"I got to go, too. You needn't to come, Chloe. I'll get supper."

Old Jethro, likewise, moved on.

As the two climbed the dunes together, Mat said ponderingly:

"Ain't you got an aunt, upcountry some place, you said might come live long o' you?"

"Why, Mat Jewett, I never dreamed o' such a thing! Grandsir had a sister, Aunt Sophronisba, but she must be nigh on to seventy."

"Well, she might feel to visit just the same." Some worldly corner of the mind of Mat had suggested this relative. He studied the girl with hard eyes. "That young lifer's a powerful takin' fellow, don't you think?"

Chloe laughed out sweetly.

"He's just the best an' nicest an' prettiest boy ever baked. He's talked serious to Bet about his mother that was a Greek an' his father, the sea captain, an' the grandsir in the State o' Maine that raised him; so Bet, she thinks he hung the moon in the sky. But I could kiss him right on his red cheeks."

Mat's face relaxed. He, too, laughed.

"Him an' Bet do seem mighty thick."

He would have said so, indeed, if he could have heard David's alluring voice that moment.

"To-morrow's my day off. I've been here a week, you know. I've planned out a pleasure for us—you and me. We'll sail up to the settlement. Then we'll take the train over to town an' see the sights there. The tide's with us both ways. What say?"

Betsy looked at him with great, astounded eyes. Three times in twenty-three years had she been to town, and each time after a month of expectancy. But if David had invited her to row out to sea in her bread bowl, she would have agreed joyfully.

"'Twill be complete," she murmured.

"This day was just made for us," cried David, the next morning, as he helped her into the slender sloop and seated her in the stern, clear of any spray.

"Ain't it glorious? Did you ever see clouds more beautiful than those big white fellows? And look at that line of green marsh against the blue sky!"

Betsy breathed in tremulous rapture, not so much for the tender greens and blues of spring as for the daring spirit that could so openly rejoice in them. Her mind leaped for an instant to Mat and grandsir, her only male standards, and the free-hearted boy beside her seemed more than ever a denizen of a fairer, sweeter world.

They sailed the boat together, she bending it in and out of the curves of the sedgy bay, he sitting astride the tiller in open water.

They caught the train at the settlement and traveled on to the town of about twenty thousand people, where all the wonders of Paris shone for Betsy's eyes.

The day was one shining ribbon of happiness unrolled on the reel of the hours. Afternoon found them weary, dusty, laden with bundles, on the road to the station. As they crossed the tracks, a man hurrying by stopped with a jerk.

"Dave Talbot! You!" He had David by the hand.

David, blushing very red, returned the grasp.

"How in thunder you get here?"

"Well, if you come to *that*—" laughed the stranger.

David turned with easy grace to Betsy, although his cheeks were still high in color.

"This is an old pal of mine, Lyne Ferrand, nephew to the Mr. Ferrand who saved my life. This is Miss Betsy Stream."

Betsy, void of all experience with introductions, bobbed a shy half curtsy and smiled her gentle, trusting smile. She thought the stranger "pretty in the face"—though not to compare with David—and pleasant spoken.

"I cut down here to see an old bunkie o' my uncle's. He wanted me to look him up before I pulled my freight for the West again, an' I kind o' reckoned, myself, on gettin' a whiff o' salt before I left. I'm a plainsman, miss, an' I ain't ever so much as glimpsed open water," he explained to the girl. "But the old man's sick, an' the family's in a hullabaloo o' trouble, so I'll rattle my goods for Idaho to-night."

"Wish 'twas so I could have you berth 'long o' me, Lyne, but I haven't any place I call my own. I'm a life-saver now, on a day's leave."

"George! That's great! Ain't there some kind o' tavern near you I can bed down in for a night?"

Betsy's heart surely turned over in her breast; her voice rattled in her throat; but she managed to get the words out in their right order:

"I—we—will be—pleased if 'tis so—you can pay us a visit—to our house—right on the ocean."

To the Westerner, such hospitality was the rule of life. He answered eagerly:

"Thank you mighty much. I'll come right along, if I got time to fetch my duds from the hotel here," and he set off on a run.

David clasped her hand softly.

"You are a sweet girl, Betsy Stream!"

Betsy could not answer, stunned by the greatness of her act. As well might

she have asked the King of Spain to domicile himself under her little low roof. And she knew there wouldn't be any fresh bread for supper, and grandsir's room was all in a heap o' things, and what would Chloe say?

She could not speak a word in all the hour in the train, so hurried was her mind on the trail of whether Chloe had churned fresh butter that day and whether there was a cake of "store" soap left for the guest. That there was any oddity in two young girls thus receiving a strange young man never entered her mind. She welcomed him as a mermaid might to her grotto a lost mariner.

And all Chloe said was:

"Oh, Bet, isn't it luck I baked fresh gingerbread an' hot biscuits for you an' David?"

"You know I'm a terrible landlubber. I'd never even set foot inside a boat till yesterday."

Lyne Ferrand smiled up at Chloe as he seated himself, awkwardly enough, in the stern of the *Swallow*.

"You've sailed a right smart while, haven't you?" he added.

Chloe looked up from stowing the lunch in the cuddy.

"Always," she laughed. "I can't call home when grandsir taught me. I could sail when I was so little I had to stand up to hold the tiller. You see, there weren't any boys, an' all our errands had to be done by water."

"You love it, don't you?"

Chloe's wonderful eyes held his an instant.

"Yes," she breathed.

"An' you couldn't be happy out of sound of the boom of the sea an' the smell o' its salt, eh?"

Again a clear ray from her dark eyes. How could he understand?

"Oh, no, no, never!"

"Like I am to the prairies. I'm



Chloe sat beside him on the sands, teaching him to rig the little sloop they had whittled out together from a block of wood.

almighty glad I can see the big puddle once, though."

Then it was a narrow beat to open water and talking must stop. The day was a ravishing one, full of the keen, yet sweet, tang of early spring, sparkling in sea and sky and shore with all the thousand hopes of the newborn year. A gay breeze from the north swept them down the bay to the narrows, beyond which rolled the ocean itself.

Chloe, true salt, kept her eyes lifting to her peak and her sheet running loose through her hand. Every now and then she cast a long look at her passenger, who, forgetful of her, watched the little waves dance past the boat with narrowed eyes under straight, thin brows. He was no boy like David, and

he had none of David's flashing charm. His face was lean and brown and rather weary looking, but handsome and keen, with a something behind it that baffled her and yet led her on. He turned suddenly.

"I got to try it!" His voice was pleasant. "Come now, teach me!"

"I don't know as I can. I never did."

"Of course you can. Here, how do you pull on your bridle so she won't buck?"

They were halfway down to the bridge before she had finished her lesson and handed the tiller to him.

"If the wind smacks you harder, ease—let out your sheet—so—see?"

"I see. Drop my curb an' let her out on the snaffle."

It was a delightfully dangerous voyage to the girl, for the plainsman insisted on beating back and showed an extraordinary aptitude for hanging on to a leg too long and coming about too short. Again and again Chloe snatched sheet and tiller from his grasp, crying: "You'll gybe her!"

Lyne was never a whit daunted either by the buckets of water he took in, the tight squeaks to keeling over, or the girl's excited reproaches, but, cool and easy as when he started, ran the *Swallow* up into an inlet on the farther side of the bay and grounded her some dozen feet from shore.

"Now you have made a flummox o' it!" scolded Chloe, very red-cheeked and breathless. "We'll have to pole her in."

Lyne built a fire on the beach and cooked their bacon and boiled their coffee, and they skipped stones and told tales alternately of wrecks and cattle stampedes.

"If you feel to stay to-morrow, Mat an' Betsy will sail with us round to Hatchet Reef. Betsy was so kind o' beat out to-day she couldn't go, an' Mat had to paint the stairs to the Light."

"Is Mat the big chap came over to meals?"

"Yes. He's been grandsir's assistant six years. He was just a poor stray boy from the Point, but he worked up, so government took him as Light keeper."

"So?" He was not interested. "Dave's a good little boy. Knew him ten years ago when he was in short pants, out on the Platte."

"You always lived there?"

"Born there. Uncle an' dad had a ranch—didn't pay out for a cent. Uncle took to grazin' all over the world—that's how he met Dave—but dad sat tight, an' when he died last year, he was a rich man. Uncle's come back to the ranch now. I made a dash East on

business an' I got to make a dash back to-morrow."

Something rose in Chloe's throat. Was her one glimpse out into the world to be shut thus?

"I want to see the whole world—like your uncle." Her face was vivid with eager longing.

"Not tired o' the water?"

"No, no, but I want to see somethin' else beside!"

He smiled on her indulgently.

"You will. Meanwhile, this is a mighty sweet ol' place."

"Stay a day more!" Like a child she begged him, her eyes soft and pleading.

"Wish I could. Say, ain't it kind o' cool for you, an' ain't it time we steered for home? It'll take us quite a spell, if we have to make those *pasears*—what do you call 'em?"

"Tacks."

"I'm a-goin' to ride her back, mind now," striding off to the beach.

"If you do, we'll both be drowned," laughed the girl.

During the long, slow beat back, they told each other stories of moving adventures by flood and field, sang songs of sea and prairie, and related their whole past lives, the girl with a touching fidelity to fact, the man with easy disregard of any unpleasant details.

"I'm goin' to come about now on our last reach. You give her to me."

"Why?"

She snatched the tiller from him.

"The wind an' sea are kickin' up—that's why."

He laughed and moved down where he could see her better. She stood up to her work, the tiller in one hand, the sheet in the other, her eyes now on her peak, now on the sea running green by their gunwale. Her slender height was lessened in an oiler; her head was bare and drops of spray glinted on her hair. Her eyes were big and bright and intent, her cheeks scarlet, her lips parted. She had braced her feet wide apart

and she swung easily to every plunge of the boat. The hand that gripped the tiller was brown and muscular like a boy's. She looked the spirit of the day incarnate, aflame with youth and strength and hope.

Lyne stared till he grew a little dazzled and bent his head as if against the sun. He shook himself and climbed up on the seat, holding by the mast.

"Better get down. I'm goin' to put her over in a minute," the girl warned.

His eyes were toward the shore.

"That a gull, there?"

"Look out!"

Still he gazed.

"Hard alee!" she shrieked at him.

How should he, a plainsman, measure the speed of a sail in a cracking wind? The boom swept him overboard. He struck the gunwale heavily, clutched the air, and sank in a fountain of spray.

He rose instantly and struck out for the boat. He was a fair swimmer, but now his leg pained him cruelly and dragged helplessly along through the water. He was fast dropping astern.

Chloe threw him the boat hook, the only loose article in the boat, and then brought the *Swallow* around on her other tack. She passed Lyne at a wide sweep, brought up short on a jolt that nearly hove down the sloop, and bore down on the swimmer again. This time she ran out a long line made fast around a cleat. Lyne leaped for the rope, missed it, and sank 'way under from his effort.

"I'll be round again in a minute," the girl called clearly.

Her lips were tight shut, her eyes intent, but she showed no excitement; indeed, she felt little. This was a pretty piece of seamanship asked of her—to pick up a man on a narrow beat in a lively wind—but she had done it before, once for Mat, once even for her old grandfather.

Now she swooped down right over

him, put her knee across the tiller, let the sheet run through her left hand, and flung the line far and strong right into his face.

Lyne gripped it with all his strength, pulled in on it, and, active in his arms still, dragged himself aboard.

"Good us for!" Chloe's voice was as bright as if she had landed merely a rather difficult fish. "Now, we'll put for the wharf."

Lyne had rolled onto the floor of the cockpit and now lay with closed eyes and panting chest, struggling to hold steady his whirling head and grip down the agony of his wrenched knee socket.

"Feel kind o' queer?" The girl bent forward over the tiller, her smile sweet and worried now.

"Hit my knee a crack," Lyne answered with difficulty. "All here, though, thank you."

"Too bad!" Her voice was soft with pity. "Here's the wharf. You lie right still. I'll get Mat to help you to the house. Don't be scared. The sail's comin' down now. Why, here's Mat!"

"I thought you might like a hand." Mat swung himself on the deck. "There's more'n a capful o' wind out in the bay, ain't there? What's happened to *him*?" His voice was dry.

"Boom swept him over. He's hurt his knee, too. You help me get him up, won't you?"

"Certain—if he can't make it alone."

Lyne was pricked to exertion by that cool voice just over his head. He hauled himself to his feet and stood up, dripping and dizzy, but yet smiling a pale smile.

"She did a bully piece of roping when I was out there in the water," he told Mat. "Lassoed me right on the run."

But none of the three valued that seamanship. Mat had not seen it; Lyne was too ignorant to appreciate it; and Chloe took it as a matter of course.

"Catch hold of him under his arm,

Mat," the girl commanded. "I'll help him this side."

Lyne ground his teeth and walked at a steady jog up into the sisters' kitchen. Betsy was there and David, on his hour furlough.

"Here's a patient for you, Bet," Mat heralded their coming. "She's doc in this crew."

"The real doctor's over to the Point," Chloe explained. "We can fetch him if you feel to want him, but sister's a natural nurse."

Mat and Betsy pulled and rubbed and bathed the knee, already swollen to a huge knob, and decided that no bones were broken and that quiet would bring it around.

"It acts just like grandsir's did, time he fell on the ice." Betsy consulted with her colleagues.

"You lie real quiet in our forerroom chamber an' you'll be bright as ever in a week."

"A week! Why, I got to pull out for cattle country to-morrow!"

Chloe interposed swiftly.

"You give you a good sleep now, an' there ain't any tellin' to-morrow how peart you'll wake up. What's the use," she whispered, as he limped off on Mat's and David's shoulders, "in scarin' the poor boy now? Bet, you an' I have got to fly round if we're to set out a relishin' supper for three men an' a boy."

When Mat, according to custom, came over at nine o'clock to snug down the house for the night, he hung around on the doorstep with a new sort of hesitation. Chloe, who was locking up, bade him good night with some haste. She was ready for bed, after her day's sailing in the nor'-west breeze.

"Say, Chloe." He jogged her elbow suddenly. "I want you should see the new moon over your right shoulder."

Chloe laughed back into the warm kitchen with its clear-shining lamp:

"Come on, too, sis."

Betsy smiled a slow, absent smile, and knitted on tranquilly. What could the moon give her of itself as wonderful as the fire and splendor of David's smile, the golden glory of his voice?

Chloe stepped backward down the path, her eyes over her shoulder, exploring the soft blackness of the sky.

"Where she blow, Mat?"

"Stop that foolery!" he ordered roughly; then, more gently, "Say, didn't you tell me that aunt o' yours in New Freedom would——"

"Aunt Sophronisba don't live in New Freedom. That was the old home. She wedded an' lives to Grassy Meadow."

Mat made a quick jot in his mind of the right address.

"Wouldn't she come for a spell here?"

"Why—whatever——"

"You see, it's goin' to come considerable hard on you, this stranger hauled up on the ways for repairs. There's me an' him an' the boy—an' that boy can store up more fodder'n an elephant—to cook for——"

"He does relish his meals." Chloe bent double in a spurt of laughter. "I could take my oath his legs are holler."

"An' you ain't got but one pair o' hands."

"Where're Bet's hands?" wonderingly.

"In Dave Life-Saver's pockets! I viewed it your aunt would be a kind o' helper for you. She could——"

Chloe's warm heart thrilled to the gruff man beside her.

"Mat's kind as a brother." She smiled in the darkness at him. "Why I reckon she'd come ready 'nough—if I was to write her. But I ain't goin' to do that, when she's real old an'——"

"All right, all right." Mat did not seem able, to-night, to wait for her words. "Turn in, now. Good night."

As he strode off toward the Light, he muttered to himself:

"That ancient sister's comin' 'long

down if there's tackle stout 'nough to haul her! I'm a-goin' to have some responsible woman with a mature head-piece onto her in that situation, if she's got more age than ol' Gathuzelum himself."

And Mat, who in these latter days would be called efficient, brought this visit about even as he had planned. In five days a rubicund old dame, a mountain of good-tempered flesh, deaf, short-sighted, and waddlesome, filled the rocker by the kitchen stove and napped and knitted and ejaculated:

"My, my, if you dear girls ain't drivers!"

All Chloe said was delivered to Betsy in bed.

"Mat is just so kind an' careful I wouldn't for a pretty penny tell him Aunt Sophie's a sight more hindrance than she is help. Men are just so dumb!"

To which Betsy, always in her trance of happiness, murmured:

"Oh, Chloe, not all!"

Lyne Ferrand stayed two weeks at the Light, or, as Chloe counted it, fifteen and a quarter days. After his burst of rage at the city doctor who condemned him to that stay, he shrugged his shoulders, laughed, and made up his mind to squeeze all the fun out of it he could.

All the fun was Chloe. She was so keen and so innocent, so brave and so sweet, like some charming boy, yet at once more sharp and more tender. He was never bored while she sat beside him on the sands, teaching him to rig the little sloop they had whittled out together from a block of wood, reading aloud from the weekly paper, playing games with the dog-eared pack of cards he found among his belongings, talking wise ignorances about life, or just sitting quiet, gazing out to sea with the wind blowing her soft hair about her

face and the sun deepening the red in her cheeks.

"George," he would say to himself at such times, "she's as pretty as a rose an' as sweet! A fellow could go clean off his head for her. I wonder——" He always stopped there.

And Chloe? It was all a lively adventure to her. The great world of which she dreamed, in which she pictured herself playing many fascinating and wonderful rôles, of which she knew not as much as the lanky boy at the Light—the great world to which she could not go had sent her one of its inhabitants. She must find out all about it from him. So far, she had no other sensations.

"You make me think o' a woman I used to know out in my country," Lyne told her one day, as he lay basking in the sun-warmed sand while Chloe mended stockings beside him, swiftly and well, as she did everything. "Your voice's like hers, too."

"Um!" She was just at a knotty corner.

"She was a beauty—or had been—but she'd been through the mill all right."

"What was her name?"

"Marie Le Moyne."

"What a kind o' foreign name! David's mother's name was Athena. Wasn't that a real peculiar one?"

"She was a sorrowful kind o' creature, poor little woman. When did your mother die?" he asked, in a sudden pity for what he felt must have been a sad girlhood.

Chloe stirred a little. She could not remember her mother, nor would her grandfather, grimly submissive to the will of Heaven, ever speak of her, but the vague remarks of the cousin, the few letters written her father from the one journey her mother appeared ever to have made, and a story or two of Uncle Jethro's, had all joined in making for her a picture of a girl full of eager



"Say, Marie, I met up with a little girl back there that looks enough like you to be you daughter."

longing for a wider, brighter life—the same longing that swelled in her own spirit on tender spring nights, or when the wind shouted behind the autumn clouds—and doomed to still her quick feet and fluttering heart in the meek grave while she was yet young. Around this girl mother, Chloe had built a shrine of love and tenderness.

"She was just twenty. She wouldn't be but forty-one, now. That's not old."

"I guess not!" He smiled his emphasis. "I'm thirty-five, myself."

"Why, you're five years older'n Mat, an' he looks like your big brother."

"Oh, Jewett's a grandpap born," with some contempt.

"I don't know anythin' really about mother. Grandsir felt her death so bad he never would speak of her at all, an' father died the next year. I made out she was beautiful in the face, an' real gay an' pretty-natured."

"Like her daughters," raising himself to look up into her face.

Chloe was in too deep a muse to notice.

"Poor little mother! I guess she wanted to travel an' see new lands an' meet fine folks, an' it all ended—at twenty—in the grave."

Lyne shook himself free of this web of gentle melancholy.

"Ain't it strange, we two here to—

gether? I've been all over the livin' world, 'most, at least our slice o' it—Alaska, South America, California—an' you've grown right here in this one spot all your days."

The girl blushed at the reproach of it.

"I'm goin' to see the world, too," she cried valiantly, "Betsy an' me. We're well fixed, an' as soon as we can get kind o' settled in our minds, we're goin' to travel all over, up an' down the lands. Maybe we'll take ship to Europe!" this last tremendously. "Sometimes I'm so wild to go I feel like I could cry!"

"You'll come back here in a year, just rampin' for your own little house an' strip o' sand," he teased.

"We're thinkin' o' takin' a farm up-country. We're inland folks by blood."

He laughed, unconvinced.

"The sea's got you." He quoted one of the old sayings of the sailors. "You'll wed a captain an' live in a house thrust out on a spit o' sand."

Chloe folded up her mending with a jerk. Something in his words left her dull and vexed.

"I don't know any captains," she told him curtly. "It's supper time."

She left him to limp off to the house by himself.

The next day Lyne told her he was well enough to go.

They wandered away together down the beach in the glimmering twilight, watching the stars shine out one by one in the deep blue sky, big and soft and kind, till all the waves were sparkled with their pallid gold. Heaven knows what they said to one another, this man, wise in the world's ways, and this innocent girl. There were no formal words of love, no binding promises; only they held each other's hands very tight, and in the shadow of the wind-beaten pines, he kissed her with all his heart.

"I need you. You'll come to me—

anywhere, any time, won't you, darlin'?" he whispered.

She answered as if she were repeating "the great vow that would incorporate and make them one."

"I will."

It was hot in the Standard City Transcontinental Hotel, and Lyne Ferrand, leaving the thirty other travelers still eating in its stifling dining room, walked out into the shadow of the half dozen little scrub oaks that figured in its advertisements as "the delightful, cool, and shady grove in which the hotel is situated." He seated himself on a bench of a lively green color and began to smoke. It was three weeks since he had left the cool salt beach, but he had not yet reached his ranch. He thought of it now with longing, far up in the airy hills.

"Lord, I'll be glad to get home!" He even considered with pleasure the start the next morning at dawn and the two days' hard drive.

A woman stepped out of the door at his back and came over beside him. He turned his head and watched her come without a sign of recognition, yet, when she was close to him, he reached up and took her hand.

"Well, sister." He said it gently.

The woman sank down beside him, leaving her hand in his without a word, and so they sat a while in silence. At a distance she had looked like a girl, tall and slim, with dark, pretty hair around her forehead. When she was close, her face had a wistful knowledge that robbed it of all claim to youth, that even made it as if it had never been young.

"Good time East?" Her voice was pathetically sweet, like her face.

"Smashed up my knee. Oh, it's all mended now. Say, Marie, I met up with a little girl back there that looks enough like you to be your dau—sister."

"Where'bouts, Lyne?"

"Oh, on the coast. I vow she was you over again when I first knew you, fifteen years ago, with Louis."

"Was she sweet-faced?" Yet she did not ask as if seeking a compliment.

"You bet she was." He stirred a little, then beat the hand he held against his knee softly. That curious impulse was upon him to open his heart to sympathy that sometimes sweeps the most secret of men into a flood tide of confession. "She lives down in a God-forsaken hole of a lighthouse—never been anywhere, never seen anybody—but she's happy as a bird an' sweet as a flower. The kind a man could stick to all his life."

"Ah!"

"She's just got her foot in the stirrup to be gallopin' off on some great hike or other—she don't know where yet."

"Who are her kin?"

"Her sister an' an ol' granny o' some kind. Her grandfather's just dead an' left her his pile."

"What were you doin' down there in that hole?"

"Oh, I had an ol' pal round there. They live 'longside o' him. My country, Marie, I feel like I could board the first train East to pick her up an' fetch her back here!"

"An' the pretty little girl at Rider-wood?" She smiled slyly at him.

"That's the dickens an' all of it! Thunderation! Why did I meet up with Kitty—or Chloe; either?" He stamped angrily on the hard earth.

"You tell me her name is—"

"Chloe Stream, an' Betty, her sister. Quaint little names, ain't they?"

The woman's free hand dropped open at her side, the fingers lax.

"You mean you'd go back East for her?"

"I don't know what I mean. I care a heap about Kitty, but— Oh, I can't say it, Marie. Chloe's a girl you

don't cross the trail of more'n once in a lifetime!"

"Chloe Stream!" She seemed to muse over the name. "Does she look to have you come back?"

"I don't know—I guess so."

"She'll break her heart, then?"

"No, she won't—for I'm goin' back to her."

"Kitty?"

"Oh, curse it all! A man can't marry two girls!" He dropped her hand to stride about under the little trees.

"They're all alone, those two girls, at a lighthouse? What is the other one like?"

"Oh, she's pretty-faced an' sweet an' good, too. She's got a fellow that's courtin' her. But my girl—I tell you, she's once in a lifetime!"

He disappeared into the shadows, where the woman could hear him striding about. She sat motionless, her hands limp in her lap, her head hanging forward a little. He walked back into the light once more.

"Say, Marie, how are you makin' out these days?"

"I'm fixed all right, thank you," very softly.

"Sure?" His hand was in his pocket. He drew it out, clasped over a wad of bills.

"Oh, yes. The Corners is a good place to keep a dance hall."

"I guess! Well, if you get in a hard corner, you know where to come."

She looked at him with sad, inscrutable eyes.

"You are kind, always, to me, Lyne."

She laid her hand upon his shoulder as he stood tall before her; then, as softly as she had come, she was gone.

"Queer woman, Marie! I bet she's got a story behind the time when Louis Le Moyne brought her here. She's had a rough life since he died."

He thought of her a moment, her wistful, tired beauty; then fell to cast-

ing over in his mind his business, which was not going well.

Marie Le Moyné climbed to a little room at the top of the hotel. She panted as she threw herself down on the bed, and her chest labored painfully. She had not latched the door, and now through the crack she saw one of the servants arranging a room for a traveler. She called to her in a husky voice:

"Get the doctor to come, but don't make a fuss."

The doctor—the usual rough-looking, skillful practitioner of the frontier—took her hand carefully.

"The old joke, Marie?" he asked, his eyes very kind.

Her lips were livid, her mouth drawn, but she managed a smile.

"Pull me through this time, doc," she whispered.

The doctor labored over her as he had many times before, and by and by saw his reward in a wan pink in her cheeks, a quiet breathing in her breast.

"Look here, Marie," he said, with kind severity, "you got to quit up on that dance hall or you'll quit up on everythin'! You let Liza Lou run it a while, an' you take a little jaunt up into the hills."

"It's a poor ol' heart, ain't it?" with her little tired, sorrowful smile.

"It'll last you a good few years yet, if you'll give it a fightin' chance, but it'll stop like a busted kite if you keep up this pace."

"I'll be good."

"Will you take that vacation?"

"I guess maybe so."

"I'll be round in the mornin' to get you off." He pressed her hand in both his. "Good night."

She lay in the hot darkness, while the flimsy hotel shook with the tread of heavy feet and echoed with loud voices.

"Chloe an' Betsy," she repeated over and over. "An' Lyne Ferrand is goin' to wed Chloe. Kitty understood him

all through. She was raised right here 'longside o' him. But Chloe, she don't know. If I was to wait? Maybe—I—can't. I don't feel as if I'd pull out o' another o' these spells. Maybe it'll make up for some o' these years."

She crept out of bed, lighted a lamp, and scribbled a note, which she gave to the servant.

"Take that to Nancy Bowers."

The sour-faced woman stared rigidly at the name on the note, but softened at the sight of the silver coin beside it.

The note read:

DEAR NANCE: I am sick and got to go East. I haven't but three dollars to my name. Lend me my fare, and I'll have it back to you in a month. You've always been my friend.

MARIE.

Then she slipped off her clothes, stretched out on the bed, and all night long lay watching through the square of her open window the stars, remote, passionless, and murmuring to herself:

"Chloe, Betsy. So long ago! So long ago!"

The *Swallow* slid through the water as if she were winged with fairy gossamer; the bay murmured the tiniest little song under her keel; the wind just brushed the gold on the blue to shining ripples; and the long mauve-and-rose shadows of sunset shook out their folds across the marshes. David swung the tiller a little back and forth, just to help her up, and smiled at Betsy as a man might at an exquisite flower or a beautiful strain of music. She smiled back at him with the candid trust of a child. And so for a while they sailed homeward in a sweet silence.

"Wasn't it a real pleasant picnic?" Betsy spoke at last. "I wish Chloe had felt to go."

David did not answer. His dark face had been flushing steadily; his eyes, soft and deep, like pools of water at night, burned hotly. Suddenly he

seized both the girl's hands across the tiller.

"You are the most beautiful woman that I ever met, and I love you with all my soul!" The Greek in him poured it out in a vibrating cry.

"Oh!"

Betsy drew away, the Puritan in her terrified.

"You know all about me, darling. I haven't hid a month of my past from you. I've played wild and loose, sweetheart, but I don't blush for those days, and you needn't, either."

"Oh, no, no!" The words fluttered from her breathlessly.

"I told you my grandsir, up in Maine, cast me off for a poor, trifling tool, a rolling stone."

"He's a hard man, like my grandsir."

"Oh, no, he's not." He laughed out that wonderful sweet, alluring sound. "He's been watching me this past year and he's seen that I've come to anchor in a safe harbor and have worked steady two months and got promoted and more wages—"

"How he know?"

"Oh, I keep writing him—I never was mad with him. And so I told him when I started in here, and he sent a letter to my captain, and my captain gave him a kind o' Sunday-school report of me—'faithful and kind and true'—like that. And so——"

"He's forgiven you!"

"And wants me to come back and work the farm for him and bring my wife home."

"Your—wife!"

"I wrote him the next day after I came—the Sunday after the blizzard—that I'd found the only girl I'd ever want to wed——"

"Oh, David, you didn't know me! Just one night!"

"Know you! That night, fighting through the storm, was fifty years long. We were old comrades when we came

through that. *Time* don't count. It's acting makes the years."

Betsy's clear eyes glowed as if a lamp were shining behind them.

"Yes," she whispered.

"And that's how I got a handsome farm and a likely house and money in bank—— Oh!"—the hard New Englander dropped away again—"you do love me, too, don't you, my darling?"

His arms reached out to her, and now the tiller was no barrier between them.

Over all the land flowed the last bright color of day, showing the gray dunes and the white-sailed fishing smacks in a tender clarity before blurring them into twilight. Betsy and David crossed the marshes hand in hand, faun and dryad of the golden age.

At the end of the garden path, Chloe waved to them excitedly.

"Forever! You been becalmed in the Gut? Supper's all over an' done an hour ago. David, you run right along, too, an' have some."

For answer, the tall boy flung his arms around her and kissed her.

"She's going to keep my little old house up in the country for me!" he cried, swaying the astounded girl in his grasp.

"David's grandsir's made up with him an'——"

"It's the sightliest farm in the whole country, an' I'm——"

"You're to live right 'long with us."

"She's the sweetest little girl this side of Kingdom Come, and the first minute I ever——"

"I was drawn to him, too, right away when he stumbled into our——"

Chloe covered her ears with her hands. She wanted to cry aloud like the little old woman in the nursery rhyme:

"Lawdy me, this is surely none o' I!"

That intense, emotional David should thus exult did not move her—he could

become lyric over a bright sea shell; but that her sister, peaceful Betsy, could stand before her with cheeks as red as poppies and eyes burning like stars! Her Betsy tokened to this stranger out of the night! She must untwist the threads of this shimmering coil alone; their presence only made its meshes whirl more bewilderingly before her dazzled eyes.

"You eat your supper. You can tell me every last thing about it by an' by."

The words were prosaic enough for

was tokened to David. She was going away some place to live with him. Her little Betsy! For although Chloe was two years younger and an inch shorter, she cherished her sister as a creature more innocent and delicate than her-



"She's going to keep my little old house up in the country for me!" he cried, swaying the astounded girl in his grasp.

Aunt Sophronisba, but they throbbed on the still air with the beat of her heart, and suddenly she caught, first her sister, then the lad, in a hot little kiss.

Her spirit of flight winged her well down the road. Panting, she sank down under the pines beside it. Here, in the face of the sunset, she could draw in calmly this vast fact. Betsy

self. So far their feet had trodden side by side the same narrow, humble path, but now Betsy was atiptoe on the ridge of the strange, far Land of Adventure, whence her own footsteps could not follow.

Suddenly Chloe shivered in the mild night air with a queer, forlorn little chill. She yearned for some other being

she loved to be near to take her hand—for Lyne, vanished into the sunset, even for the harsh old grandsir who had yet been of her bone and blood. A dim, twilight ache of loneliness for her unknown mother asleep among the hills stole into her spirit.

A rattle of harness and a man's voice urging on a horse turned her about swiftly. A wagon from the station five miles away was coming down the road. Chloe stared amazed. No one ever drove down here, since the Light, the farm, and Uncle Jethro's cabin, were the only houses. The wagon stopped, let out a passenger, and turned back. Chloe's heart leaped. Lyne? No, the figure was that of a girl, tall and slender and quick. Like one wonted to the path, she climbed the dune and walked straight toward the Light. For a moment she crossed its beam and showed a beautiful, white face. Who was it? Mat had no relatives, she knew, anywhere in the world, and the boy assistant was a waif out of nowhere. As the stranger stepped out of the glare from the Light into the shadows beyond, the watcher saw Mat come out, stop her, and take her into his office. To-night was thick with happenings.

The shadows under the pines touched her courage. She crossed the road to a rock that fronted the sunset valiantly and still shone in its light. The colors dimmed in the west; night drifted down from the sky; a sea bird away off called a desolate cry.

"Chloe," a quiet voice behind her.

"Mat." She did not start, although the sand had deadened his steps.

The man sat down beside her on the rock. Chloe drew up to him a little. His big, solid presence was comfortingly real in this world of elfland.

"Chloe, my girl, I ain't any hand to spin a story, an' I got a hard one to put before you. I guess I'll have to blurt it right out. You've got grit. Pull it up now."

Her lips could not form the word, "Lyne?"

Mat took her hand in his, gripping it into pain. She remembered the night she had broken her arm, when he had held her hand just so while the doctor had set it.

"Your mother's come back!"

"My mother!" vaguely.

"She ain't dead, like you've always thought. She's been livin' out West, an' she's here, right now."

"Mat, you're crazy! Mother died when I was two months old, an' is buried up to the ol' homestead."

Mat crushed down on her hand.

"Your grandsir told me all the truth o' it, the day before he died. He said he wanted some one to know it, so as if anythin' ever happened, you girls could be told."

She struggled to drag away her hand, but he held it tight.

"I'm tellin' you first, Chloe, because, for all you're the youngest an' wild as a hawk sometimes, you can stand up to it stiffer'n Bet can. You got to have courage for the two o' you, mind!"

It was the bugle call to the soldier.

"Go on. I shan't give way." Yet she leaned against his big shoulder, too queerly weak to sit by herself.

The man's whole body trembled, and his voice creaked like a taut rope.

"She was only seventeen—your mother—an' light-hearted an' high-spirited, same as you, an' from what I can make out, your father, who was years older—was gloomy an' hard. He was an upright, good man, but he wasn't the one for a little gay girl. You know what your grandsir was. He'd have trod Betsy down into the earth if you hadn't been here to stand in front o' her."

"He couldn't tread me down!" fiercely.

"No, you're all spring." For an instant she felt his breath in her hair, as if his lips were close to it. "Your

mother didn't have any sister to keep her company, an' 'twas an even more remote kind o' place here then, for the railroad hadn't been built. There came to survey for it a young fellow from the city—Louis Le Moyne, was his name."

"Marie Le Moyne!" The name leaped from some sleeping fold of her brain.

"What? Le Moyne was—well, all the things your father wasn't. But—he was a scoundrel!" The man's voice sank to a deep note.

"But I don't understand! How did she get out West?"

He groaned at the innocence that he must strike, and his voice was stern for his duty.

"She ran away with him—lef' your father an' you babies. She sent a letter back sayin' she wanted her children to be told she was dead."

"My mother!" It was a cry into the night.

"Dear, she wasn't but twenty year old!"

"I am twenty year old!" with austere passion.

"Your father wouldn't go after her, an' he wouldn't let your grandsir, either. Your grandsir never heard anythin' more of her as long as he lived."

"Oh, my poor father!"

"That's like her!" muttered Mat under his breath. "Her first thought's for some one else beside herself!"

"You got to tell Betsy." That might spur her courage.

"I won't tell her!" She reared up straight beside him. "I'll send her back to her—to him!"

"He's dead."

"To those folks out West where she's been."

"You're her daughter."

"She deserted me!"

"She's sick an' poor an' sorry, now."

"Oh, Mat, Mat, my mother that I loved so!"

She slipped down into the sand at his feet and hid her face against his knee, weeping agonizingly. He laid his head on her head, keeping it there in silence.

After a long while she spoke in the darkness, in a weak, tired voice:

"Mat?"

"Yes, Chloe."

"Oh, I'm so glad you're there!"

A strange, strangled sound broke from him, but all he said was:

"I'm always here."

Another long silence.

"I'll go see her now."

He drew her to her feet quickly, for fear her courage might break.

"When you see her——"

Chloe stood alone in the doorway of the Light office, a little room with a dim lamp. She had come so softly that the stranger had not heard her, and she could look at her unaware. She saw a slender woman in shabby black, very thin and white and weary, but lovely still, and, oh, so terrifyingly like herself! It was as if she saw Chloe Stream as she might have been saved from some great wreck of life. A pitiful creature and a frightening.

She stepped gently across the threshold. The woman did not cry out dramatically. She merely smiled and said simply, even easily, but with an infinite sadness:

"Is it Chloe or Betsy?"

"Chloe."

"You are just what I was at twenty. Lyne Ferrand said so."

"You know Lyne!"

Her mother moved over close to her and laid a hand on her shoulder. Chloe could see how bony the arm was.

"I have known Lyne years. I nursed him when he had yellow fever in Texas. He's been good to me, many times."

"Marie Le Moyne!" It said itself again.

Her mother looked at her with the sorrow of all the forlorn women of the ages in her dark eyes.

"No, Polly Nevitt," her girl name.

If she had defended herself or cast herself upon her daughter's mercy, Chloe would have flung her off savagely, but this broken, tired woman, who held herself too beaten to be received with either anger or reproach, moved in the girl a pity so vast that it almost made her die. She put her warm young arms around the thin body and held it hard.

"Mother!"

"My baby!"

Chloe had kept the letter in the pocket of her apron an hour. It was excuse enough to the others that she was too busy to read it, yet she herself knew that she delighted in it, yet feared it, too much to open it until she was alone. Now, under the farthest apple tree of the orchard, out of sight of the house, she took out the one sheet of business paper. She read it very fast, gulping down its meaning, then slowly sipping it drop by drop. It was from Lyne Ferrand, the third letter he had written her since he had left her, and it asked her, with glowing phrases, yet in sincerity, to marry him. He could not come East for her—this was fall round-up—but if she would travel two-thirds of the journey to him, he would meet her the other third.

Chloe dropped the letter on the ground beside her and looked away off across the meadows to the low ridge of the hills, burning out their last little hour before winter in a magnificence of orange and red. Her world had rushed along at such a whirlwind rate since that stormy night of early spring that her head spun; she wanted to stop trying to keep up with it, if only for a moment.

Spread before her was one of the loveliest stretches of northern New

England farmland—rolling, fertile, shining with miles of ranked-up corn and rimmed with the autumn-colored hills. Here and there a shine of green and a glint of red told of apple orchards still green and piles of gay-cheeked apples piled in mounds beneath the trees. In the air was the tang of wild grapes ripening in the sun. A land of peace and plenty.

Chloe sighed.

"I wish there was so much as a drop o' water anywhere! All that cornland makes me thirsty!"

The wide, golden fields dimmed into the grays and greens of the ocean, the rustle of the leaves and the hum of a few late insects into the steady voice of the waves. All summer she had seen the mirage of the sea and all summer heard that far-off voice.

For Betsy had married David and come to live with him on his rich farm in his great house, and had brought Chloe and her mother to keep house in one wing of it. At first Betsy had been steeled against her mother, and all Chloe's protecting tenderness had been roused to shield her from the other's coldness; but gradually, in the joy of her love for David, Betsy had softened into placid acceptance of the meek, gentle new member of the family. Betsy, Chloe realized, had never held her mother in memory as "a thing eskied and sainted." Her sister's even sweetness, too, rested her mother's frayed nerves as her own tempestuous nature could not. Her mother touched a faint, frail happiness once more, in little housewifely tasks and the beauty of the still country.

The farm on the lonely seashore was to be sold to the new captain at the life-saving station, who wished to bring his wife down to live near him. Chloe was going back the next day to pack up their belongings and arrange for the deed. Her mother had offered to go with her, but she so plainly shrank from

the sea and the whole place that Chloe at once refused.

"It's only a couple of days, an' Mat's there."

"I shan't ever see the dunes again, nor the pines growin' in the sand, nor my little *Swallow* an' the sea," she told herself this morning, as she gazed with unseeing eyes across the fields.

Her blood leaped as if whipped; then sank low in its channels. Never to look again upon her ocean! Never to hear its call!

"Lyne says his country is just as grand." She said aloud bravely.

"Chloe! Daughter!"

"Yes, dear."

"I'll set down here by you." Her mother seated herself beside her and slipped a hand into hers. "You got a letter from Lyne Ferrand."

"What makes you say—"

"Child, don't put me off like that. You think a great deal o' him?"

"I guess so—yes, I do."

"He's comin' here for you?"

"He can't. I'm to go to him." Somehow this sad directness left her no power to evade.

"Did you ever think what brought me back to you?"

"You said—"

"I was sick an'—sad? I was." The dark, melancholy eyes looked away across the world as if they saw only the dead years. "I saw Lyne, daughter, an' he told me he was comin' East to wed you. I came back to prevent it."

"Why—what was it— What— difference—"

"I held my babies in my arms before I ever saw Louis Le Moyne." The words were no more than a whisper.

"Why shouldn't I wed him?" Her eyes were fixed upon her mother, hot with anger, and yet with fear in them, too. "You shan't tell me he isn't good! I know him."

"I knew him long before you.

Fifteen years ago, in Texas, he had yellow fever. The folks at his ranch left him, an' I took care o' him. He was an awful sick boy, an' there wasn't any doctor. I saved his life." She said it without any pride.

Her mother never spoke of her life in the West to her daughters, and Chloe's heart gave a little twist as she heard her now. The woman went on steadily in her worn voice.

"I've met up with him over an' over since that time. He never forgot me—he's been good to me often an' helped me when I needed it. He's brave an' he's stanch to his friends an' he'll stand by his word—"

"What more do you seek in a man? Not one o' them is perfect—or us either!" passionately.

If there was any stab in it, the other did not mark it.

"There was another girl—Kitty Dana—up at Riderwood. He had spoken to her before he came East."

"Perhaps she didn't want him any more," she flamed back.

"Perhaps she didn't," softly. "That don't matter, though. Dear, can't you take my word for it? He ain't the one for you."

"If he didn't prize me an' want me, why should he write back to me after all these weeks, askin' me?" She had drawn away from her mother as if she were an enemy.

"He does prize you an' want you, dear, an'—an'—*maybe* he will always—but—but—"

"That's all gone an' behind him—that with the girl you said."

Mary Stream looked at her daughter in an agony of doubt. How could she defeat such brave innocence? She held out her arms yearningly to her daughter.

"Darlin', don't let my comin' back be all in vain, an' all I've suffered! Oh, don't you see? He's a light-o'-love—

there's been others. Kitty knows that—she could tell you——”

“How do you know it?”

They looked at each other, mother and daughter, a long, hard look, and the woman watched the girl with eyes like swords to see the answer grow in her eyes. It did not dawn. She saw only trouble and doubt and steadfast purity of heart.

A dreadful cry broke from the woman. She cast herself against the tree trunk, her face in her hands. Instantly Chloe's arms were around her.

“Mother, dearie, don't feel it so! I can't, I can't say I won't, but I'll think it over. I won't write a word till I come back from home.”

Her mother clung to her, weeping, with an agony her daughter could not understand.

Her train was late; the man who owned the one horse at the Point had gone off. Chloe swung off to walk the miles to her home. The day was gray and damp and still, the sea a sheet of lead, and the air full of a salt chill. The somber threat of winter was over all the marshes. A day to cool the blood and depress the soul. Chloe drank in the briny dampness with a deep sigh of happiness, refreshed her homesick eyes and ears with the dark moaning monotony. This was the land of heart's desire. The ceaseless whirl of thought that had whirled through her brain for hours ended; mother, lover, were alike forgotten.

The shut-up house had that peculiarly lonely look forsaken dwellings take on, so much more haunting than wide, void places where man has never made a home. The girl's heart sank before it. She thrust back its key into her pocket and sat down on the kitchen step. All the exultation of the tramp down died within her. Her home was to pass into the hold of a stranger, her boat to be sailed by alien hands; her

mother was better content in the calm of her sister's affection; Lyne was not truly hers. The great adventure, life, wore a bitter, drear face.

She shivered and looked toward the west, where the sun was setting behind bars of clouds, like a soul imprisoned. A sail dipped at the wharf, ran down; a man leaped ashore and raced in long strides through the dunes.

Chloe sprang up and hurried toward him.

“Mat!” she cried, with all her heart in her voice.

He waved a hasty hand and plunged into the lighthouse.

“If that ain't Mat! Time to set the Light goin' an' he wouldn't lay to to give me a hail, though he hasn't seen me for four months!” She laughed, yet tears wetted her face.

Mat found her sitting on the kitchen step and seated himself beside her without one word of welcome. All the fire of her greeting had died cold within her. They sat in sheer dumbness a long minute. Then Mat spoke out:

“Have you missed the ol' sea, Chloe?”

“Oh, Mat!” Her voice broke.

“An' the Light, that's seen you to bed every night since you were born?”

“Don't!”

“Say, you cook us our supper to-night. We've left the things in the house just as they were.”

“Who cooks now?”

“Me an' the boy. I don't know which is the poorer tool at it.” He laughed grimly.

“I'll get you a meal will be the best you ever put into your mouth.” She grasped eagerly at the chance to break the sad spell the home-coming had cast over her.

Together they cooked the supper, Mat getting in Chloe's way and breaking eggs and spilling milk till all their somber mood was bathed in laughter. Then, when the boy had gone back to

the Light, they washed the dishes and sat down by the redly glowing stove to talk over the summer.

The wind had begun to sigh about the house; the thick voice of the sea moaned along the beach; spatters of rain dashed against the windows. The lamp, poorly trimmed, burned low; the room was full of shadows. Dreary and lonesome to a stranger, it meant home and loved association and security and peace to the girl.

Every time she looked across at Mat in his chair by the fire, a strange pain clutched at her heart. How big and strong and kind he was! And how deeply woven in with the happiness and the pain of her whole life was that silent, steady presence! Mat had taught her to skate and to sail, to swim and to fish. Mat had been with her in her search for Betsy that anxious morning after the storm. Mat had helped her bear the agony of the return of her mother. Could she go forth into the coming days without Mat and the sea? Yet she was leaving them both, forever!

Silence, long and deep, fell between them. The girl heard the clock tick and the fire snap, and saw the years in a far-away land unroll before her. Among all the alien sights they held, none was so remote as the face of Lyne Ferrand. Had she ever truly loved him? She could not tell. Only, she knew now that she feared him as a stranger who had taken possession of her life ruthlessly. And she to him was only one of many; her mother had said it.

"Mat!" she cried piteously.

He was by her side on the old lounge in an instant.

"What is it?"

"Oh, I love it here! I don't want ever to leave it!" She said it like a child, and all her vivid, eager face was troubled piteously.

Mat's eyes were on the floor.

"It's pretty dull here an' monotonous—just the same things over an' over, winter an' summer."

"It ain't dull to me."

"An' there ain't any gay folks to talk to."

"I don't want gay folks."

"An' the one man's just the ol' Light keeper you've known since you were a little girl."

Chloe sprang to her feet with a laugh sweet and bubbling and like the old days.

"Matthew Jewett, you want to put me out o' the notion o' my own home?"

Her eyes danced, rose color flowed up into her cheeks. All the doubt and worry and misery of the summer were cast out by her heart. This was her home, this bleak land her ain countrie, this sober Matthew her spirit's comrade. The other man had wooed her with wonderful phrases; this one never said a word. Yet, in the homely tasks, in the silence of the old room, she had felt his love like a finer air all about her. She would not have it otherwise; it was so like Mat.

Mat stood beside her now, and his height and shoulders made a small woman of her. His face worked; he moistened his lips; he strove to speak. Then, without words, he opened his arms and held them out to her yearningly. Chloe slipped into them and hid her face in his breast.





MY WALLS

By Mary Brent Whiteside



HEY are but four—not far apart,
Nor very broad, nor very high;
Yet they reach upward to the sky
And downward to my heart.

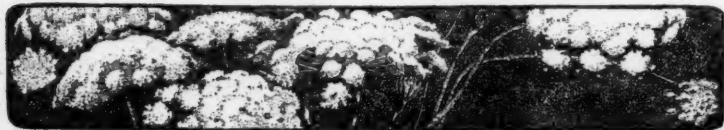
A sepia meadow, framed in brown,
Releases shadow shapes that pass
O'er endless areas of grass
That billow up and down.

That is the south; and next, the west
Reveals a bard's immortal face;
Between my walls, the meeting place
For Hamlet and the rest.

A picture next of one who bore
A name not writ with living names,
Nor great nor brave. It only claims
My heart and nothing more.

And last the east. Here is for me
The sum of all the rest, it seems—
Love, sorrow, poetry, and dreams.
Here is Gethsemane!

They are but four, these walls—not high,
Nor very broad, nor far apart;
Yet they reach downward to my heart
And upward to the sky.



The White Chiffonier

By Evelyn Gill Klahr

Author of "The Queen's Hat," "The Chooser," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY DAN SAYRE GROESBECK

A truly remarkable story with an atmosphere of dramatic tension that makes it easy to read but hard to forget.

I THINK to no one but myself, not even to Claire, has Melicent ever told the entire story; and since she has told it me, I have thought of little else. There is one thing I have been wondering about—and I must ask her to tell me next time I see her—and that is how she felt when she first saw, on entering Claire's room, the row of photographs on her white mantelpiece.

Mine, of course, doesn't count, for I had no part in this story save in the hearing of it. No one but Claire kept that photograph of me out in plain view, or any place, in fact, except a bottom bureau drawer. It was taken my senior year at college, and I wore one of those dresses that became hideously grotesque the minute they went out of fashion. And what an emaciated, hollow-eyed soul I was, my cheek bones almost pushing through my skin, looking for all the world like a convent novice who has spent too much time at prayers and at embroidering altar cloths! Only—I remember so well!—it was managing the senior minstrels and not altar cloths that had broken down my health. To loyal little Claire it was not absurd, because it was a photograph of her dear friend.

Then came a photograph of Claire's husband, Ned, in a dreadful carved Swiss frame, so big and ornate that it quite overshadowed the plain little photograph within. That, too, was Claire's loyalty; dear, clumsy Ned had once

given her the frame, and she cherished even its ugliness.

Overlapping the frame of Ned's photograph, there was a picture of Bennet Kane, Claire's favorite cousin. It didn't matter to Claire that Ned disliked Bennet; she loved them both, and there they both were. Bennet was big and glorious, and even in the eyes of the photograph you caught something of that spirit that teased and laughed and suffered and went roaming over the world.

Claire did not know that Melicent and Bennet knew each other, for Melicent had never told her, and I would like to know how Melicent felt when she saw Bennet's picture beside her own on Claire's mantel. Melicent's photograph was taken the same year as mine, and yet was not at all absurd or grotesque. She looked out from the photograph with an almost sculptured perfection; her gown was just right, her soft hair was just right. But I never wanted to hug her as I did Claire, for it was a loveliness that held you at arm's length.

"Fastidious" is the word, I think, for Melicent Hampton, for she was ever that, even in her own thoughts. She even blamed herself for not thinking of Claire that night in the sleeper when she was hastening to that dear girl's sick bed, but for thinking instead of herself and a man—and the man was not Melicent's dead husband. There



It seemed so pitifully cruel that Claire had unwittingly, in her delirium, divulged her terrible little secret.

had been a telegram saying that Claire was having one of her old attacks and wanted to see Melicent. Melicent had started immediately, torn with anxiety; but once within her Pullman berth, old memories had caught hold of her. Sleepers had a way of doing that to her. The thick Pullman curtain hang-

ing on one side of her, and on the other the thicker curtain of the black night sprinkled with passing lights, had shut out the world from her and had shut her in with herself and her memories, which had come in a rushing torrent, snatching her up and carrying her along away from all thoughts of Claire.

The next morning, when she and Claire's husband stood face to face in the hall, she felt ashamed that her thoughts of the night before had been so much more of herself than of her much-loved friend.

Ned helped Melicent off with her coat in his old dear, clumsy way, catching part of her chiffon collar with the outer garment and almost wrecking it. But from the very first minute Melicent felt something different about him, and it filled her with dreading premonitions; she did not dare ask one word about Claire. When Claire had had these attacks before, Ned had been defiantly courageous, and Melicent had always had a superstitious feeling that this defiant courage had somehow pulled Claire through. She felt its absence now. She was frightened.

Nor did Ned speak of Claire.

"Good trip?" he asked of the traveler.

"Not bad," Melicent replied. "Of course I didn't sleep." Then she added, "Wonderful weather, isn't it?"

To this Ned agreed, "Wonderful weather!" And there was not one word of what was overcrowding both their hearts.

It was not until she saw the nurse that she mentioned Claire's name—the same nurse who had attended Claire a number of times before.

"Is she very low?" was Melicent's anxious question.

"Oh, not that," said the nurse. "Though on account of her heart, there's always danger."

"Is this the worst attack she's had?" Melicent inquired further.

"Oh, no, I wouldn't say that," the nurse replied comfortably. "Besides, we hope she'll be better now."

"Now?"

"Yes, now you've come."

Melicent was puzzled.

"I wish there were something I *could* do, but what can I?"

"She's kept asking for you, and

there's something on her mind that you'll have to get off for her."

Melicent wondered over this.

"When am I going to see her?" she asked.

The nurse replied:

"I think you might come in for a few minutes now."

She led the way to the patient's room.

Claire's room was relentlessly white and pure, like Claire herself—the woodwork, furniture, curtains, rugs, even the nurse, all of the uncompromising white. Melicent longed to put a pale rose hanging at the window and a soft rose silk coverlet at the foot of the bed, just to relieve that whiteness.

On one side of the great white bed was Claire, her hair brushed back from her lovely forehead into a tight braid. The fine, but severely plain little nightgown came close around her neck. You would never believe, to see her, that the shops were full of boudoir caps and wonderful, fluffy invalid things. Melicent did not know any other woman who could have kept the charm of her personality without a single decorative aid; for in spite of all this whiteness and severity, Claire was as enchantingly lovely as she had ever been.

Against the wall, a few feet from the side of the bed where Claire lay, stood a large white chiffonier. It was between the chiffonier and the bed that Melicent had started to place her chair. Claire made a little worried protest, and Melicent saw that she was being motioned by the nurse to the foot of the bed.

After the first few affectionate words of their greeting, Claire didn't seem to be listening at all, though Melicent was telling her the choicest anecdotes about their mutual friends. She turned over on her side and lay staring at the white chiffonier.

Presently a finger of light from the window lay in a dazzling streak across its surface.

"It is pointing," said Claire, "to the second drawer from the top. And the drawer is unlocked," she added with a worried frown. "I must look up the key——"

The nurse lowered the blind, shutting out the finger of light, and Claire seemed vastly relieved. She closed her eyes and seemed to doze a little.

Melicent and the nurse stepped out into the hall for a few words together.

"She won't let a soul come between her and that chiffonier," explained the nurse. "Mr. Elling—you know, I feel so sorry for him. I think he's the sweetest and the bravest man I ever saw in my life; but now that there's something between them he doesn't know, he's just gone to pieces. He's a wreck. It just makes my heart ache to look at him. Do you know, she won't even let him be on the same side of the room with the chiffonier?"

"Is it something in the chiffonier drawer that's worrying her?" inquired Melicent.

"That we don't know, Mrs. Hampton, but we're counting on you to find out. We think that's why she wanted you. I'm going to leave you alone with her after she's had her nap, and I hope you won't stop at anything in the whole world to relieve her mind. Doctor says that if we can do that, she's got a pretty good chance."

When Melicent returned to the sick room, she carefully avoided the vicinity of the white chiffonier and noticed at once that Claire seemed relieved—relieved almost to the point of gayer.

"I am so glad to see you," Claire exclaimed, "glad clear down to the soles of my bedroom slippers!"

"I'm glad to see you, too," Melicent assured her.

"And you're as pretty as ever," Claire went on. "You look like something that grows in the gardens in springtime. I'm glad, too, that you got here so quickly. How did you do it? I guess

you flew here on the wings of your hat."

She lifted a slender braid of hair out on the pillow and, clasping her thin hands behind her neck, lay staring at Melicent.

"There's something I want you to do for me," she went on. "That's why I sent for you. Only, I've got to think a little bit first before I tell you."

She turned over on her side—the side nearest the white chiffonier—and lay with her wide eyes upon it.

Melicent sat and waited and still sat on. Presently the eyes of the sick woman drooped a little. With each wink they stayed closed a little longer. Presently they did not open at all. Her breathing grew deeper and more regular. Melicent sat and waited with the tense stillness of the sick-room watcher.

So the nurse came back, and Melicent was sent away without the least clew as to her mission there.

At dinner and all during the evening Ned broke her heart. His attempts at cheerful conversation and even his attempted courage were too pitiful. Something about him was gone.

In the late evening, after the doctor's extended visit, the nurse came down to the living room where they sat.

"She's wandering a little bit to-night," said the nurse, "but she keeps asking for both of you, first for one and then for the other, and the doctor thinks perhaps it would be well for you to come in for a little, for a very few minutes."

Ned stopped first to get a long box from his desk drawer. He hesitated a moment and then opened the box to show Melicent. It was the absurdest gift in the world for an invalid—a pair of long white gloves for evening wear. It was like Ned, and Melicent felt an aching in her throat.

"She likes nice gloves," Ned explained apologetically, as they went upstairs to the sick room.

Melicent found the invalid's room as

severely pure and white under the artificial light as it had been in the daytime. From all the polished surfaces came little white ghosts of reflections. In her big bed, Claire looked thinner and frailer than ever. She still lay on the side of the bed nearest the white chiffonier.

"Ned," she said to her husband, "I wanted to tell you about your socks. There are some in with the others that have darns in the soles. Be careful you don't get any of them; they'll hurt your feet. I should have sorted them out to give away, but I didn't have time."

A great light of tenderness filled Ned's eyes, and he came, his gift in hand, to stand close beside her. Claire puckered her brows into a worried little frown, the nurse lifted a warning finger. Then he remembered, and with a sort of dejected patience returned to his seat at the foot of the bed without even giving her the box.

"Dear," he said to Claire, "you mustn't think of other people now." Melicent wondered if either of the others caught that tired, hopeless note in his voice. "You have no duties to any one but yourself now."

"Yes, I have," Claire contradicted him. "I must always do what is right for my friends and they must always



Ned was sitting there with bent head. He was worn and haggard and broken.

do what is right for me. You came just as soon as I sent for you, didn't you, Melicent?"

"Yes, dear, I came as soon as you sent for me."

Claire raised herself on one thin elbow.

"Did I tell you about the letters?" she demanded.

"No, Claire, you didn't."

"Not about those love letters?"

"No, dear."

"They used to be up in a trunk in the attic, but I thought I had better

bring them down here, so I could keep my eye on them. They're in this drawer." She pointed her white finger at the second drawer from the top of the white chiffonier. "In the right-hand corner from the back. The drawer is unlocked; that's why I have to keep watching."

Ned spoke:

"Don't you want me to take them for you, dear?" he asked.

Claire turned toward him in surprise, as if she had forgotten he was there.

"Of course not—or why would I have sent for Melicent?"

"Aren't they the letters I wrote you, sweetheart?" he asked.

"Why, no, of course not!" she said. There was something almost like amusement in her voice. "Of course they aren't."

It was more to spare Ned than anything else that Melicent broke in.

"What am I to do with them?" she asked.

"Burn them—burn them just as soon as I am gone. You're my best friend, aren't you?"

"I think I am."

"Then you're the one to do it. Besides, I think it's more suitable for a woman. And of course you won't read them? I can trust you not to read them?"

Melicent promised she would not.

Claire stirred uneasily.

"The pillow is too hot," she complained.

The nurse turned the pillow for her, and Claire closed her eyes and rested peacefully.

The other three sat silently in Claire's relentlessly pure white room, alone with those little ghosts of reflections from the white surfaces.

The nurse sat like a white-clad, impersonal priestess of service. Ned's head was bent forward; the box of gloves was still in his hand; there was

something about him that made Melicent think of a child who is lost or isn't sure that he is wanted.

It all became unbearable to her. It seemed so pitifully cruel that Claire had unwittingly, in her delirium, divulged her terrible little secret to all three of them. It was many times more cruel to Ned. And here they must sit and witness his breaking. Melicent could bear it no longer. She rose and left the room.

She could not sleep at all that night. She did not even attempt it, but kept turning in her bed to find a place where the sheets and pillows seemed cool.

The discovery had been paralyzing, for those letters must mean—how could they mean anything else?—that there was another man than Ned in Claire's life. One moment she found it utterly incredible, and the next moment she found it impossible to believe anything else, when Claire's own words convicted her. Wasn't there any one who was married to the man she loved? Was Claire's life with Ned, after all, not much better than her own with Percy?

Those two years Melicent had lived with her husband, that short span between their marriage and his death, had always been a dreadful eternity to her. He had been querulous and irritable; she had been unsympathetic. She had got along at all only by withdrawing from him for long hours in which she had lived again her few days with the man she hadn't married—Bennet Kane; those wildly beautiful days, shot through though they had been with pain and bewilderment.

She had been engaged to a Boston man, Percy Hammond, and her aunt had taken her on a trip West to see something more of the country before she should settle down with Percy. It had been on this trip that she had met Bennet Kane, and from almost the first moment, she and Kane had both been carried off their feet by the force of

their mutual attraction. Even now, after all these years, she had only to close her eyes to feel again his arm holding her close, and his lips against her cheek as he had whispered to her.

Percy had been back there in Boston, writing her semiweekly accounts of his health and his habits and his books. How different this frail, self-centered egoist had been from the glorious, big, red-blooded man who was Bennet Kane!

Of course her old fastidiousness had kept asserting itself. "I am engaged to two men at once," she would think, and would loathe herself for the moment. But she had insisted upon waiting until she returned to Boston before breaking off her engagement.

"That's the decent thing to do," she had told herself. "To see him in person and make a clean breast of it."

Most of her trip back to Boston had been spent in writing adoring letters to Bennet Kane, which she had kept mailing all along the route. When she had returned to Boston, she had found Percy really ill, needing her and clinging to her. Then her old fastidiousness had gripped her about the throat.

"You can't throw a man over just when he needs you most," she had told herself; but she had known that she never could make Bennet Kane see this. If she had told him simply that Percy was ill and in need of her, he would have laughed and would have come East at once to tell her how much more he himself needed her. She had had to lie—that was all there was to it—that dreadful lie about finding that it was Percy, after all, that she cared for.

Those unforgettable words of his bitter reply came flooding back into her mind. She could not endure them, nor could she endure to think of the desolate years when she had heard nothing from him, even after Percy's death, and nothing about him save a very occasional remark from his Cousin Claire.

She had learned, during those Western days that Bennet and Claire were cousins, but Claire knew nothing of Melicent's affair with the man, and Melicent, fastidiously, had never told her.

If only she could have sought him out after Percy's death! But here her indomitable fastidiousness came forward as always. She could not seek him out, for there had been his letter, his wicked, bitter letter, when she had told him that she loved Percy and was going to marry him. It wouldn't even have been decent to seek out a man who had said things like that to you. Besides, he must have learned through Claire that she was free and had he wanted her, he could have found her.

Oh, if he only had!

Was there something like that hidden in Claire's heart? Was it only Claire's wonderful sense of duty and loyalty that had made a beautiful thing out of her life with Ned? Whereas she, Melicent, and Percy had only worried miserably along.

Poor old Ned! If he should lose Claire now, he would not even have his memories, for they would all be poisoned by this other thing. And yet, if Claire should live, would that not be even worse, with this coming between them every minute of their life together? Suddenly she found herself not believing it. The conviction came with a catapultic force. It couldn't be true. It absolutely wasn't true. If Claire's love for Ned were not real, then there was nothing real in the whole universe, not even the stars, or the rivers, or the solid ground underneath her feet. Only, it had got to be cleared up before poor old Ned lost his mind.

She found it impossible to lie there any longer; she switched on the reading light beside her bed and, looking at her watch, found that it was just four. In the east there were faint premonitions of the dawn.

She rose, took a cold shower, and

dressed quickly, as if there were little time to lose.

She was surprised, as she descended the stairs, to find that there was a light in the library. Ned was sitting there with bent head, just as he had sat the night before in Claire's room. He was worn and haggard and broken. She caught the same forlorn look that she had noted the night before.

"Come out into the kitchen with me,"

Melicent insisted, "until I make some coffee."

"I don't want any," he protested; but, nevertheless, he followed her to the kitchen.

"You've got to have more courage," Melicent scolded him, as she measured out the coffee. "Claire is going to get well."

"Of course she is," he agreed, with a brave attempt at his old hopefulness.

"I've seen Claire worse than this many a time," Melicent went on. "She'll make it all right. Only you've got to help her."

"Melicent," he broke out, "I'm no good. I've gone to pieces. I'm no good."

"Stuff and nonsense and rubbish!" declared Melicent. "What you really need is rest. Coffee's a poor substitute, but at least don't try to talk any more till you've had your cup."

When he received his cup, he had something more to say, and he said it without looking at Melicent.

"I've sent," he said, "for a few of her relatives, just in case—I've sent for her cousin, Bennet Kane."

Melicent's blood turned cold. There was no doubting the significance of



A single glance at the package sent the blood from her cheeks. For the briefest instant, she stood there paralyzed

his words and his manner. It came to her in a terrible flash what he meant. *Bennet Kane and Claire!* So that was what Ned had in his mind. Oh, not that! It was outrageous! It was unthinkable! And yet Claire was so lovely, so adorable, you couldn't blame Bennet Kane or any one for caring. But it was maddening, and now at last she could be inactive no longer. She must do something to clear up this dreadful thing. It couldn't be! Not Claire and Bennet Kane! And yet why not? It couldn't be! And yet why not?

As soon as she had finished her cup of coffee, she started out for a walk alone in the chill morning hours. She knew, almost without any further consideration, what she must do, and she loathed the doing of it. It was something for unclean hands. Even this last little virtue was stripped from her. Before this, she had always kept her hands clean. She had never done the things that nice women could not do. In the years when she had bungled not only her own life, but those of others, in the years in which she had not been very courageous or very fine, there had always been a whole category of things she could never have stooped to do; and yet here at last she had come to a place where she must do the thing that she loathed, and do it at once.

On her return to the house, she could not bother even to change her shoes and skirt, which were wet with the dew. It was no time for trivial affairs like that, when the happiness of two human beings lay in her hands.

From Claire's room she could hear the quiet voice of the nurse, chatting as she went about her calm routine of sick-room tasks.

Maybe they could afford to be calm and deliberate when it was just human life they were saving, but Melicent found her own mission so much bigger and more feverish.

She stood waiting in the hall outside the door, leaning against the black walnut banister, tense, patient, wishing the nurse would come out to give her permission to enter.

Presently she did come, on her way downstairs for the patient's breakfast. She nodded a bright, serene greeting, and in reply to Melicent's whispered inquiry:

"Yes, indeed, she had a fine night. Just a fine night."

"How soon may I go in to see her?"

"M-m!" the nurse considered. "I guess you'd better wait until she's had her bath and her breakfast and the doctor's been here."

Melicent's heart sank. All that time in which to lose heart!

She went downstairs to the library and found Ned sitting motionless at his library desk. There were a couple of telegrams lying open before him.

She didn't stop for any more breakfast. She couldn't sit still long enough even for that. From the dish of fruit on the sideboard she took an orange, and went out for another restless walk.

She wondered if, after all, she could do it. She loathed the thought of it. It was sneaking; it was disloyal to Claire, who had trusted her above every one. And she had promised Claire; she was not forgetting that. She had promised Claire on her honor that she would not. It was prying; it was meddling; it was everything in the world that she felt she could not be. There was a chance, too, that she would discover something even more hideous than Ned's suspicions. Yet she knew she had to do it.

On her return to the house, she encountered the doctor, who was just leaving. He was jubilant. There had been a decided turn for the better; the patient was going to get well.

Drowning out even her own rejoicing was that uppermost thought in her mind. What good would Claire's liv-

ing do if there were always that suspicion in Ned's mind?

At the threshold, again her heart failed her. The scrupulous white room was too fastidious a place for the sneak-thief task she had to perform. It was as fastidious as Melicent herself. She knew she must do it at once or she would not be able to do it at all.

After her good morning to Claire, she went straight to the white chiffonier and, in spite of Claire's exclamation of protest, opened the second drawer from the top.

"Melicent," cried Claire, with a little wail in her voice, "I'm not going to die. I'm going to get well."

"I know you are, dear. Did you say they were in the right-hand corner toward the back?"

"But," protested Claire, "if I am going to get well, you don't need to take them."

Melicent explained:

"When they are here, you worry about them. They are on your mind every minute. You wouldn't do that if you knew they were in safe hands."

Claire was silent. She seemed to be thinking it over.

"Now I have to keep watching the chiffonier, don't I?" she said. "And if you had them, I wouldn't have to watch."

"That's just it," Melicent agreed, while her hand went exploring, fumbling through soft white linens and Italian silk garments and sachet bags until it came upon a package of envelopes held together by a broad rubber band.

She drew it forth with trembling fingers. A single glance at the package sent the blood from her cheeks. For the briefest instant, she stood there paralyzed, and then attempted a reassuring smile at Claire, summoned the nurse from the adjoining room, and went downstairs. She had to hold hard to

the banisters because her limbs trembled so and because she was a little dizzy.

She took the letters into the music room and closed the door behind her. Before she opened them, she sat for a short time in the big chair, her eyes closed, her head resting against the back, the letters on her lap still bound together by the broad rubber band. When she had first drawn the letters from the drawer, she had recognized that firm, small black chirography of Bennet Kane's, and that was why she was dizzy.

It took courage to remove that black rubber band, but when she had done that, she was amazed, she was incredulous. Those other letters were in a different hand—a hand at once the most familiar and the strangest to her own eyes. She snatched three or four of the letters and held them to her lips and then to her soft neck. She opened one for the sake of reading again the words she herself had written to Bennet Kane those years before—dear, foolish phrases she had forgotten she had ever used, which yet she recognized as her own—"Best Belovedest, I am thinking about you every minute of the day." "This continent has no business being so wide, if it is going to separate the two of us."

She turned to that other letter, written to Claire in Bennet Kane's own hand: "DEAR LITTLE COUSIN: I don't know any one I can trust more than you, and there's no one else I'd be willing to have know what a fool I am. What do you think of a man who is fool enough to carry around with him, to India and Persia and the Philippines, letters from a woman who doesn't give a hang for him? I had a narrow escape the other day. It is by the barest chance that I am in my berth in a Pullman instead of a six-foot box. My escape is not a very entertaining story, so I won't say more of that, but it made

me do some thinking. It wouldn't be very fair to her if these letters were found in my possession after I am gone—and read; for of course they would be read. No one but yourself could resist the temptation. That's why I'm sending them to you. I can't destroy them, because I'm too big a fool, but the minute anything happens to me, will you please chuck them in the fire? And please, no one is to know, not even Ned."

Melicent gathered up her letters and went out into the hall. As she passed the big hall mirror and saw how lovely she looked, she was exultant. Her gray eyes looked into the mirror at eyes that were shining back at her. Her hair was becomingly disordered; there was a new rich flush of excitement in her cheeks; she had kept her girlish slimmness.

"I haven't grown old and ugly," she told herself happily. "Oh, I haven't grown old and ugly!"

Then she passed on into the library, where Ned was pacing the floor.

"Did you telegraph for Bennet Kane?" she called out in her clear voice.

Wincing and with pain in his eyes, Ned replied apologetically:

"No, I haven't, not yet."

"You needn't telegraph him," she cried, exultation still in her voice. "Now take these letters." She put them into his hand and folded his fingers over the packet. "These are the letters from the white chiffonier! Don't read them—just peep into them to see what they are—and then go upstairs to Claire."

She smiled into his troubled face.

"As for sending for Bennet Kane," she went on, "you needn't bother about that, for I'll telegraph him myself."

She started for the door, and then lingered, lingered long enough to add this bewildering explanation: "It's crazy, it's irrational, you know. As long as I was perfectly nice and there were things I couldn't do, I messed up the world quite dreadfully; and then when I was ready to soil my hands and didn't care, it comes out right, like a storybook."

TOGETHER

WHEN God took you away,
I thought that life would be
The dread epitome
Of dawnlight without day.

How faithless was such dread!
Death made you more my own,
And every hour shone
With radiance instead.

Your shining spirit taught
My tear-dimmed eyes to see
Our changeless unity—
This miracle was wrought!

Through every star on high,
Through every breeze that blows,
Through every flower that grows,
I know that you are nigh.

D. E. WHEELER.

At the Mercy of Sarah Smith

By Lucy Pratt

Author of "Ezekiel," "Ezekiel Expands," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. PAUL BURNHAM

Perhaps you have already made the acquaintance of Ezekiel. He is an original and delightful character whom we are glad to welcome to the pages of SMITH'S.

JES' looker de peach blossoms!"

His eyes feasted on the shimmering pink orchard, which stretched away to his left, and his feet lagged comfortably on the soft, smooth road beneath him. The world seemed only a smiling home of untroubled harmony to Ezekiel—and he proceeded evenly on his way.

"Cert'nly is a pretty day! An' I'se kin' o' glad it's Sa'day, too. Look like 'tain' nobody wanten be keepin' school ter-day, anyhow!"

There were a few scattered steps behind him and he turned his head.

"Heyo, dat you, Tibe'ius? Where's yer gwine, Sam'el? 'Cuz ef yer's thinkin' 'bout gwine school, w'y, yer's mistekken de day. It's Sa'day, boy! Where's yer gwine, anyhow?"

Samuel appeared to know not only his mind, but his purpose.

"Oh, where yer s'pose I'se gwine?" he grunted. "I ain' gwine school on Sa'day, is I?"

"I dunno ef yer is or not. But ef yer is—w'y, yer's de onlies' one where's gwine. 'Cuz I ain' gwine school on Sa'day!"

"I ain' gwine school on Sa'day nudder!" echoed William Henry, just arrived, but in hearty agreement with the prevailing sentiment. "I ain' gwine school on Sunday nudder!"

"I ain' gwine school on Sunday nudder!"

A matchless harmony of mind was furthering a condition involving all the

subtle, lurking dangers of an inert peace. But Ezekiel viewed the last speaker with sweeping disparagement.

"Look ter me like 'tain' no way ter speak ef yer ain't!" he objected, with a touch of moral responsibility in his tones. "Look ter me like 'tain' a ve'y nice way ter speak 'bout Sunday!"

"I ain' spoke no disrespec' 'bout Sunday," argued Samuel, with honest zeal. "I jes' say I ain' gwine school on Sunday—an' I ain't, is I?"

"Well, mebbe yer ain't," put in Tiberius in pacifying tones, "but yer ain't oughter bus' right out ser quick 'n' rough, w'en yer speak 'bout Sunday. Soun' like some kin' o' ba'ba'ian."

Samuel was entirely appreciative of the rumblings of hostility in the air.

"Well, p'raps I is gwine school on Sunday, too!" he combated. "I s'pose I kin go ter Sunday school, cyan't I?"

"I doan' know ef yer kin or not," considered Ezekiel. "I s'pose dey ain' gwine accep' eve'ybody in Sunday school. Look ter me like yer oughter tekken a li'l int'res' 'bout improvin' yerself, ef yer's r'ally studyin' 'bout it, or nex' yer know dey's gwine shet de do' on yer, an' prob'ly lock it, too!"

"I s'pose I kin climb in de winder, cyan't I?" Samuel's undaunted optimism was beautiful.

"I doan' know ef yer kin or not. 'Cus w'en dey see yer comin', dey's prob'ly gwine nail up der winders, too."

"Well, I s'pose I kin climb down de chimley, cyan't I?"

"I s'pose yer kin—but look ter me like I rudder stay ter home."

"Look like I rudder stay ter home, too!" came the universal chant of unmodified agreement once more. Samuel was plainly aware that both he and his cause were bordering on a condition of extreme disfavor.

"Well, ef I cyan' go down de chimley, w'at is I gwine do, den?" he grumbled savagely.

Ezekiel's expression, at this point, expressed gentle charity toward all, malice toward none.

"W'y, ez I tole yer befo', yer oughter given a li'l p'eparation ter yerself, dat's all," he explained kindly. "Yer oughter—well, yer oughter start in wid—p'r'aps a li'l missiona'y wuk fus', an' den p'r'aps a li'l readin' outen de hymn an' psalm book, an' den p'r'aps yer'll be mo' raidy fer startin' in ter Sunday school! Co'se yer could start off on de missiona'y wuk mos' any time. Yer could start off right now, ef yer wanter tekken de time an' putten yer min' on it. 'Tain' nuthin' ter pervent it, is dey?"

"I s'pose 'tain't," conceded Samuel, with a sullen glance but ill befitting the desirable missionary.

"Well, I s'pose yer kin try, anyway. Anybody kin try a li'l missiona'yin'. Only thing is—how's yer gwine start?"

"I ain' pertickler."

Samuel's casual interest was not exactly suggestive of missionary zeal, and grudgingly following Ezekiel over the April road until the peach blossoms were only a faint, vanishing sea of misty pink, he turned, with the others, to the more neglected byway which sauntered leisurely away to the neighboring village. As Ezekiel's eyes sought the various low buildings scattered at easy distances along the way, his feet quickened perceptibly—and then lingered again in doubtful hesitation.

"De boys fum de ins'tute go missiona'yin' on Sa'ah Smiff, I s'pose," he suggested briefly, an anxiety—which,

in an effort of offhand ease, he strove to eliminate—lurking in his voice. "I s'pose we kin go in an' see Mis' Sa'ah Smiff, ef yer wants ter. I reckon she's mos' sho' ter be feelin' kin' o' po'ly, anyhow."

Refusing to be drawn into any argument on the subject of Sarah Smith or her condition of health, they followed, quite indifferently, into a small, overgrown yard, where the new life of wild spring grasses and growing things mixed itself indiscriminately with tattered, half-dead bushes and last year's tomato plants.

"I reckon she's prob'ly in de baid," observed Ezekiel, as he pushed the door back and lingered in its shadow.

As his companions stepped in behind him, a voice of cool challenge greeted him from some uncertain background just beyond.

"Where's da?" it demanded briefly, and the small company moved from the passageway to the inner room.

Sarah Smith raised herself slightly on her disheveled pillow and regarded her visitors with a watery, dissatisfied eye.

"Is yer come fer any pertickler pu'pose?" she inquired, without preamble or introductory adornments of any nature. "'Caze ef yer ain't, yer ain' done right ter bus' in on anybody's natchel privacy, is yer?"

Just a fleeting, momentary embarrassment was visible on the face of the leading missionary.

"We's jes' speakin'—'bout yer," he explained in conciliatory, soothing tones, admirably adapted to the sick, "an' we 'cide we'll stop an'—an' ax how's yer feelin'. I s'pose yer's in de baid 'cuz yer feels too bad ter set up, ain't yer?"

Sarah seemed to take peculiar exception to this supposition, and her watery eye regarded the group before her more critically than before.

"Nemmin' w'at I'se in de baid fer,"

she retorted, in a voice neither gracious nor well pleased. "W'at yer s'pose? I ain't yere fer nuthin', is I?"

Ezekiel and his friends looked at the reclining Sarah as if there might be arguments both for and against this possibility.

"I dunno ef yer is or not," murmured the leader. "I s'pose yer ain' dere fer nuthin', an' dat's de reason we come ter see yer, anyway."

Sarah's response was but a feeling grunt, and Ezekiel glanced about him in a feeble search for something like actual support.

"I s'pose w'en dey come missiona'yin', dey start off wid sump'n' like prayer or singin'—doan' dey?" he mumbled, his first ardor unmistakably waning. "Tiberius, I s'pose yer kin start off wid prayer, cyan't yer?"

Tiberius looked badly startled.

"I ain' gwine start off wid no prayer!" he dissented fiercely. "Who yer s'pose I is, anyway? I ain' no preacher! I ain' gwine start off wid no prayer!"

Ezekiel's eyes rested thoughtfully on Samuel, and his confidence returned in all its characteristic, cheerful trust.

"I s'pose we's thinkin' pertickerly 'bout trainin' fer you, w'en we come," he meditated. "Yer kin start off wid praye'r, cyan't yer, Sam'el? Co'se we come pertickerly fer you, ain't we?"

"I doan' cyare ef yer is or not!" objected Samuel, with a violence quite impossible to ignore. "I ain' gwine start off wid no prayer! I doan' cyare who yer come fer! I ain' gwine start off wid no prayer!"

"Well, 'tain' no use a-holl'rin' out like dat, ef yer ain't. 'Tain' nobody gwine shoot yer, ef yer is start off wid prayer—is dey? 'Tain' no danger fum it, boy!"

"Look like yer kin do it yerself, den!" retorted Samuel. "'Tain' nobody gwine pervert yer."

"Well—I ain' skyeered, ef dat's w'at

yer mean. P'r'aps I rudder do it myse'f, anyhow."

Ezekiel, with his eye fixed steadily on the invalid before him, dropped onto a low wooden chair beside the bed, deep in thought.

"'Tain' much ter offer prayer," he muttered cheerfully, "an' I 'cide I rudder do it myse'f, af' all."

Samuel was neither ready nor in sympathy with the spirit of the meeting.

"Well, w'at yer settin' down fer?" he demanded. "'Tain' no way ter se' down w'en yer prays, is it?"

"I doan' know ef 'tis or not," meditated Ezekiel, undisturbed. "But it's de way I'se gwine do it, anyway."

He half closed his eyes and gazed narrowly at some magic point before him. The effect suggested such easy, unruffled spiritual balance that even Samuel, for the moment, was voiceless.

"Oh, Lawd, I'se jes' gotten a few wuds ter say," began the seated missionary, smoothly, "ef Yer kin spa' de time ter listen at me, an' ef Yer cyan't—w'y, jes' say so, an' I kin putten it off twell ter-morrer or nex' day jes' 'zacky 's well."

There was a slight pause, evidently designed for Divine encouragement or the reverse, and then Samuel recovered himself.

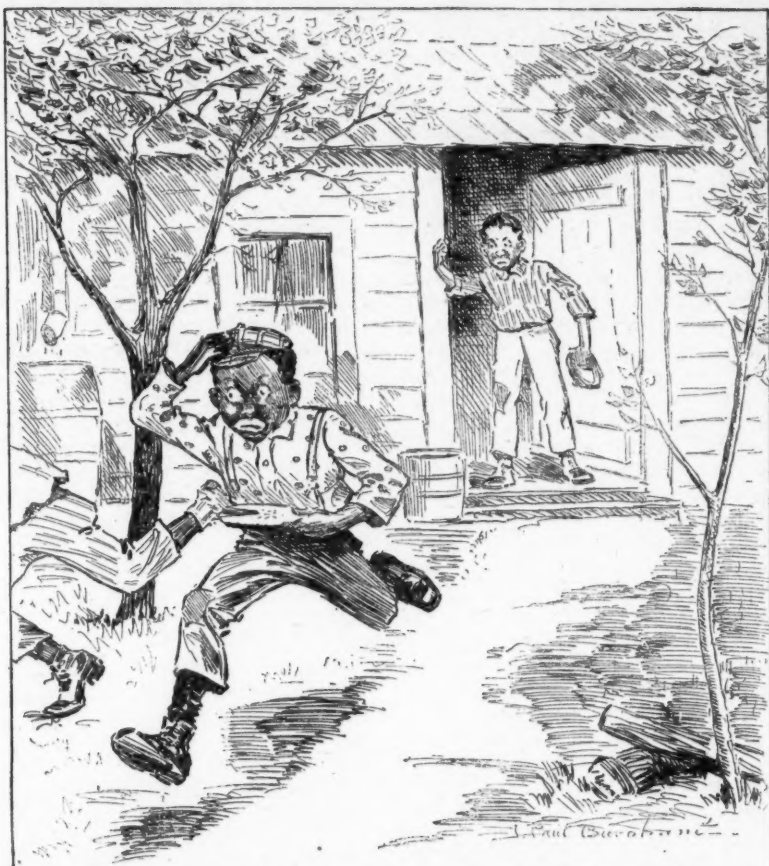
"Well, He ain' gwine listen at yer a-settin' on a cheer! I kin tell yer dat, myse'f! Yer doan' show no respect."

Ezekiel's eye cocked itself wide open upon the speaker.

"Oh, He cyan' was'e time a-wo'yin' 'bout w'at I'se settin' on!" he retorted. "He doan' cyare ef I'se settin' in de coal skuttle! Ef yer ain't b'lieve it, I'll ax Him."

He paused both gently and reverentially, and once more his half-closed eyes sought the magic point.

"Oh, Lawd," he continued, "I jes' wante ax ef it mek any pertickerler diffunce w'at I sets on w'en I prays.



Ezekiel, standing alone on the threshold, gazed upon a vanishing body of brother missionaries.

I'se a-settin' on a cheer right now—an' Sam'el's a-holl'rin' at me, 'cuz he say 'tain't right. Well, co'se ef 'tain't right, w'y, say so, O Lawd, an' I'll se' down whe'er Yer perfer."

Another slight pause, unbroken either by mortal or Celestial voice, seemed to give effective proof that dissent from Heaven, at least, was the last thing to have feared.

"Dat ain' nuthin'," grumbled Samuel, plainly disappointed. "He ain' spoke

'cuz He doan' wanten trifle wid yer. But mos' anybody kin tell yer yer oughter gotten down on yer knees, ef yer wanten git good 'tention."

For just the fraction of a minute, Ezekiel appeared to hesitate. Then, with a glance of tolerant concession, he slipped gracefully to the floor.

"Oh, Lawd, I'se change ter my knees," he explained softly. "I done it 'cuz cyan't nobody pray wid Sam'el keepin' ser much noise. An' ez I tole

Yer befo', I'se gotten a few wuds I wanten say. I'se mos' forgot w'at dey is, counten Sam'el talkin' ser much—but it's mos'ly pe'tainin' ter Mis' Sa'ah Smiff, where's layin' right yere in de baid nex' de wall. She ain't r'ally 'splain yit w'at's de matter wid 'er, an' I ain't ax 'er. Furdermo', I doan' guess Yer kin tell much fum de looks nudder. 'Cuz ef 'tain' fer 'er mouf bein' kin' o' drap open, an' 'er eyes kin' o' half shet, she look 'bout same es usual.

"But dat ain' w'at I'se gwine speak 'bout, anyway. 'Cuz 'tain' mek no diffunce w'at's se matter, it mus' git r'al wea'ysome a-layin' dere—an' de thing I'se fixin' ter ax 'bout wuz dis: Does Yer reckon Yer kin spa' de time ter study 'bout Mis' Sa'ah Smiff fer four-five minutes—an' p'r'aps gitten 'er *outen de baid*? Co'se I knows Yer gotten Yer han's mos' full, counten it bein' de spring o' de year—an' all de las' year's trees an' haidges an' flowerin' plants a-bus'in' out on Yer 'bout same time. An' it look kin' o' mean ter wo'y Yer, too. 'Cuz I guess 'tain' gwine be ve'y easy gittin' 'er outen de baid, anyhow. 'Cuz she's well-grown an' large ter look at—an' she's a-layin' dere like she's prob'ly gwine *stay* dere. Look like 'tain' nobody gwine blame Yer, O Lawd, ef Yer r'ally perfer not ter mix up in de case. So ef Yer ain' tekken no pertickerler int'res', an' doan' feel no call ter help—w'y, I'se jes' gwine drap de subje'."

At just this point, Sarah Smith shifted a bit clumsily on her invalid's couch and rose slowly to one elbow, where she rested and surveyed the kneeling figure before her.

"Is yer done prayin'?" she observed, with absolutely colorless inflection. "'Tain' no call fer prayer, anyway, ez I knows. Yer done 'nough, boy. Hyeah? Furdermo', ef I needs any 'sistance fum de Lawd, or fum anybody second'a'y ter de Lawd, w'y, I'se

able ter ax fer it myself. I ain't los' my voice, has I? No, I ain't," she went on ably. "An' I doan' aim ter lose it. It's Sa'ah Smiff where's speakin' now," she explained. "An' ef anybody's 'quainted wid me pussonally, dey knows I kin speak fer myself, an' I doan' 'quire no *sec'eta'y* t'er do it fer me. Fudermo', yer ain' done right w'en yer rep'esent me ter de Lawd way yer is jes' now. Yer given a wrong idea 'bout me! I'se a able-bodied woman, an' w'en I feels de sperit move me fer gittin' outen de baid, w'y, I'll *git* outen de baid. Ef anybody say I *ain't* able ter, I denies de charge. I'se a able-bodied woman, but I *perfers* stayin' in de baid ter gittin' up an' tromplin' roun' de house. It's mo' res'ful on de min' an' body gen'ally, an' dat's de reason I'se yere. Co'se I gitten up 'casionally an' cook lunch, ef I needs it, but I doan' jump out like I'se los' all control, nudder. 'Caze I ain't. I'se a well-controll' woman, ez well ez able-body, an' w'en yer starts in holl'rin' at de Lawd 'bout my bein' same ez deaf 'n' dumb—'n' *cripple*', w'y, all 'tis—I hope He doan' notice yer!"

Ezekiel was upon his feet, standing silently beside his companions, and Sarah Smith dropped back on her pillow again with a short sigh.

"Yer ain' treat me right," she concluded in a sad voice of partial resignation.

Ezekiel stepped timidly forward.

"Is yer cook lunch ter-day?" he inquired, looking unquestionably contrite.

But Sarah remained dumb upon her pillow.

"Is yer hongry?" questioned Ezekiel faintly.

With an effort of the suffering, but forgiving martyr, Sarah raised herself just perceptibly and cast a look at a low shelf in the shadow, which, in crumby disarray, suggested food that had gone before.

"I s'pose a li'l' col' tea an' pie ain'.

gwine hurt me," she relented. "Prob'ly I needs de suppo't, af' all."

"I s'pose dey's outen de kitchen, ain' dey?" suggested Ezekiel, glancing intelligently through an open door to the low shelf in the shadow.

"Ya'as, yer kin pass me a piece 'o' pie—ef yer wants ter. I buys my cake an' pies o' Mis' Cash Myers," she added, in a voice of untold peace and comfort.

And followed by his brother missionaries, Ezekiel moved softly through the open door.

But it was William Henry who breathed a deep and rapturous sigh as he gazed up at the small, half-eaten, but still juicy, apricot pie—right there upon the shaded shelf.

"Look like some kin' o' pie!" came his awe-struck syllables, as a summons from Sarah Smith fell clearly upon their ears. And as Ezekiel stepped back, with obedient alacrity, the others stepped forward to the shaded shelf.

They were still lingering there, in the shadow, when their leader returned to them. They glanced, in a cursory manner, toward the wide-open door at the back, and to the protecting trees beyond, and then—gradually—they retreated toward the door.

"Where's yer gwine?" inquired Ezekiel. "Where's yer gwine, Sam'el?"

Samuel threw back a look suggestive of slight uneasiness, and for the fraction of a minute, the others paused and glanced back, too.

"Yer's been stealin' pie, has yer? Well, look ter me like yer kin go in right now an' 'splain ter Mis' Sa'ah Smiff jes' w'at yer done."

But there was a general scuffle within the open door, and Ezekiel, standing alone on the threshold, gazed upon a vanishing body of brother missionaries.

"I'se gwine af' 'em, den," he observed briefly.

In the shadow of one of the distant protecting trees he found them, as they

drooped lightly against its upstanding trunk and looked away at the new green April landscape.

"Ain' yer 'shame?" he went on smoothly, quite ignoring any interruption whatsoever. "Well, ef yer ain', yer oughter be. Jes' looker w'at yer done! Yer goes in ter do a li'l' missiona'yin' on a lady, an' all de missiona'yin' yer done 's stolen 'er pie!"

They still gazed at the view, favoring their chosen leader with neither look nor denial. Ezekiel turned almost fiercely upon Samuel.

"Dat ain' no way ter do missiona'yin'! Look ter me like yer doan' r'ally know w'at missiona'yin' is, does yer?"

"I ain' ax ter go missiona'yin'," mumbled Samuel. "I ain' wanter go missiona'yin'—anyway!"

"Well, I'se sorry yer done it! 'Cuz yer ain't perpare' fer it. *Yer ain't perpare' fer it, an' yer's shown it!* Shuh! Yer ain't fit ter go missiona'yin' on a dawg! Well, de onlies' thing I kin say is dis: Is yer raidy ter go right back ter Mis' Sa'ah Smiff's an' 'polergize fer w'at yer done?"

There was a sudden movement, indicative only of continued flight, but Ezekiel paused not.

"Hol' awn, now," he soothed. "Co'se, ef yer rudder be 'rested by de p'lice an' go ter jail fer 'bout leben or twelve years, 'tain' nobody gwine stop yer. But yer's 'blige tekken yer choice between de two—an' 'thout studyin' ve'y long 'bout it, nudder!"

It was Samuel, who, at this moment, recovered the gift of speech.

"Well, w'at we gwine say, ef we does go back an' 'polergize?" he demanded sourly.

Ezekiel meditated in momentary confusion.

"Listen at me!" he ordered. "'Cuz ef yer git *balkin'* 'bout it, w'y, co'se she's gwine sen' fer de p'lice, anyway. Listen at me, Sam'el! *Fus'* yer kin tell 'er yer done sump'n' yer ain't

oughter, las' time yer come ter see 'er, an' *nex* yer kin tell 'er *ter guess w'at 'tis yer done!* Ef yer start in kin' o' easy, dat-a-way, sump'n' like a game, probly she ain' gwine be ser mad."

The idea of eluding justice was creating something like genuine interest in Samuel.

"How yer mean sump'n' like a game?" he inquired cordially.

"Lay down dere siden de tree, Sam'el," encouraged Ezekiel, "an' make b'lieve yer's Sa'ah Smiff."

Samuel's enthusiasm cooled a bit at this, but he gingerly picked out the most favorable-looking spot available, and then dropped down as comfortably as Sarah Smith might have dropped down upon her own invalid's couch.

"Yer done fine, Sam'el," approved Ezekiel. "An' yer kin' o' favor Sa'ah Smiff, too, ez yer lay dere. Now, hol' awn jes' a minute, 'cuz I'se gwine show yer de way ter 'splain it to 'er."

Samuel glanced up with an eye quite as gloomy as Sarah's own, and Ezekiel shifted in thought, on the grass.

"We—we's jes' come—ter tell yer sump'n'," he began, in tones lightly touched with both responsibility and caution, "an' I reckon yer's gwine be kin' o' s'prise ter hyeah it, too."

He paused, in momentary hesitation, and once more proceeded.

"We come ter tell yer 'bout—how we done jes' a—jes' a li'l' *bu'glarizin'* las' time we come ter call on yer. We—come back apu'pose ter tell yer we—*we stolen a li'l' sump'n'* w'ile we's a-missiona'yin' on yer!"

There was a more distinct pause, and Samuel glanced up in a kind of lugubrious, tentative attention.

"W'at yer stolen?" he inquired.

"Well, I s'pose yer cyan' *guess* kin yer?" broke out Ezekiel, with a kindling eye of inspiration.

"I kin, too!" retorted Samuel, in nothing short of bold and uncompromising defiance.

"No, yer cyan', nudder," Ezekiel continued firmly. "But yer kin *try*, I s'pose. Yer kin *try* an' guess w'at we stolen on yer, w'en we come a-missiona'yin'!"

Samuel, to all appearances a little regretful of his last ill-judged retort, considered a moment in heavy silence.

"Guess w'at we stolen!" came the cheerful encouragement.

"De—*do'mat*," ventured the reclining Samuel, with a pardonable touch of pride at this unexpected inventive facility.

"No, 'tain' no *do'mat*! We ain' stolen no *do'mat*! Guess ag'in, Mis' Smiff!"

"De—de lamp chimley," stammered Samuel, with shaken confidence.

"No, but yer's improvin', too! Yer r'ally jes' miss it!"

"De baidstaid!" broke in Samuel with fresh enthusiasm.

"No, an' yer ain't usin' good sense now, Sam'el. How's yer gwine steal de baidstaid wid Mis' Sa'ah Smiff a-layin' atop uv it? You ain' doin' yer bes', boy."

"How's I gwine do my bes' a-layin' out yere in de dus' like I'se *cripple'?*" mumbled Samuel, in a feeble attempt at excuse. "I—s'pose yer probly stolen *my shoes*, ain't yer?" he suggested in gingerly accents.

"No, we ain' stolen yer shoes," came the hearty response, "an' furdermo' yer needn' wo'y, 'cuz we ain't *gwine* steal 'em! W'y, look like anybody's r'al triflin' where come a-missiona'yin' on a lady an' steal 'er *shoes*! Sho! W'y, who you think we is, anyhow, Mis' Smiff? An' where'bouts is yer *leave* yer shoes, w'en yer gotten in de baid? Well, *we* ain' gotten 'em, anyhow, 'cuz fus' place dey ain' *'long* to us, an' nex' place—w'y, dey—dey's yer *shoes*—an' yer shoes is yer *shoes*—ain' dey? Yas'm, *yer shoes is yer shoes*!" echoed Ezekiel, in an inspired burst of unanswerable argument. "Mo'n all dat—



"Is yer like crambe'y pie?" came the good-natured roar of challenge.

mos' any lady's boun' ter fin' use fer 'em, ef she live, too! An' dat ain't all, nudder. 'Cuz longer she live, prob'ly de mo' she git 'tach to 'em, an' ef dey las' twell she die, w'y, dey's de ve'y same shoes dey wuz fus' time she place 'em on 'er foot! *De ve'y same!* An' reason is—well, w'at's de reason, Sam'el?" threw in Ezekiel, glowing with the unquestionable richness and beauty of the subject.

"I dunno," growled Sam'el.

"Reason is a shoe's a shoe!" retorted Ezekiel, with rising enthusiasm, "an' yer cyan't change it into a cake o' soap or a bag o' sugar or a pan o' milk—an' yer needn' try, 'cuz yer's gwine mek a complete failure uv it. Shoes is shoes, an' soap's soap, an' sugar's sugar——"

Ezekiel paused but a moment for temporary readjustment and a short, but badly needed breath of life.

"Sugar's sugar! An' so yer cyan' blame any lady where claim she's gwine

use 'er shoes fer shoes! An' ef anybody start out ter *steal* 'em on 'er—w'y, look like dey oughter feel 'shame, anyhow. No'm, *we* ain' stole yer shoes!" concluded Ezekiel in perfect voice.

"W'at is yer stolen, den?" put in Samuel, anxious for the end. "Ef yer ain' stolen my shoes—well, *w'at is yer stolen?*"

"I'se glad yer ax me—an' yer done jes' right ter ax me, too! 'Cuz, yer see, we 'cide ef we's r'ally gwine *steal sump'n'*, w'y, we 'cide we'll steal sump'n where yer ain' gwine *miss* ve'y much! So we done our bes', Mis' Smiff, an' we—we—well, we stolen yer pie! Co'se yer kin see fer yerself yer ain' gwine miss it same way yer would yer *shoes*, an' furdermo', 'fo' de summer's pas—we hope we kin replace it!"

Ezekiel drew a deep breath of solid relief.

"Come awn, Sam'el, does yer s'pose yer kin talk sump'n' like dat, w'en yer

tries ter 'splain it ter Mis' Sa'ah Smiff?" he concluded.

Samuel dragged himself up slowly from the ground.

"I dunno ef I kin or not," he meditated, in no cheerful mood.

"Well, come awn an' try, anyway. I s'pose yer kin do yer bes'! Come awn, Tibe'ius. Come awn, Wilytm Henry!"

With a feeling grunt from Samuel, the brother missionaries, with Ezekiel in the lead, once more wound their way to the modest cottage of Sarah Smith.

As they rose to the tottering steps again, and then passed on into the room beyond, they paused for the briefest moment. For not only was the bed deserted, but Sarah Smith was tramping massively about the kitchen in neither a lady's shoes nor an invalid's slippers, but in manly boots.

"Hyeah she is," muttered Ezekiel, and with Samuel skulking nervously in the background, they moved on.

As they stood in the small kitchen once more, and Sarah Smith still tramped in her manly boots, she threw them a look, so accidental in effect that whether or not she was even conscious of their return appeared doubtful.

"I expect I oughter git me a li' nou'ishment an' suppo't," she observed, with an indulgence of tone both deep and vibrating.

"Come awn, Sam'el," exhorted Ezekiel in a muffled voice.

Samuel glowered dangerously at both Ezekiel and Sarah Smith, and as he moved a scant pace forward, he looked quite limp with apprehension.

"Yer cyan'—guess—*w'at we stolen*—kin yer?" he mumbled dejectedly, and paused with perfect appreciation of the futility of all human endeavor.

Sarah Smith gave him but a fleeting look of question.

"Cyan' guess w'at yer stolen!" she derided loudly. "Cyan' guess w'at yer stolen!" she echoed. "*Yer stolen my ap'cot pie—dat's w'at yer stolen! An' furdermo', I expect yer foun' it satisfyin' ter de tas'e, too, ain't yer?*"

Samuel murmured something in unhappy distraction, and swiftly Sarah's eyes shifted to the sagging closet door. She tramped cheerfully across the room, and then it was that the great and magnanimous nature of Sarah Smith was clearly, unquestionably revealed.

"Well, ef 'tain' no ap'cot lef'," she announced, in a steadily increasing volume of sound, "*ef 'tain' no ap'cot lef'—w'y, I s'pose I'se 'blige cut in on de crambe'y, den!*"

The missionaries neither moved nor spoke.

"*Is yer like crambe'y pie?*" came the good-natured roar of challenge. "Well, 'tain' no way ter git it, a-bunchin' up dere in de cohner! Ef yer wants a piece o' Mis' Cash Meyers' bes' crambe'y pie, w'y, come out yere on yer laigs—an' say so!"

When the missionaries to the sick were properly fed, and Sarah Smith was standing within the protection of her own back door, she glanced with tender appreciation into her own back yard.

"I reckon I'll go out an' chop a li' wood," she murmured luxuriously. "I'se thinkin' 'bout choppin' up dat ol' lawg inter kindlin's."

The missionaries stood near their invalid companion, but they moved forward to the step, looking both fit and nourished.

"*Is yer satisfy wid yer lunch?*" bantered Sarah.

William Henry smiled a beautiful, broad cranberry smile and turned to Ezekiel.

"Where's we gwine missiona'yin' nex'?" he urged joyously.

The Woman Who Had None

By Ruth Herrick Myers

Author of "The Broth of the Gods," "The Bird Song," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY CLARENCE ROWE

One terrible day in the life of Lucinda Secler.

A N old white cat with a black tail streaked across the path of the automobile and hid for its life under the blackberry bushes; but if the man and the girl, straining forward in the car, even saw it, their tense faces showed no sign. Out of the gate and down the long, dusty road whirled the machine in frantic haste; down into the tall shelter of the grass crouched the cat with pounding heart and dilated eyes; and up overhead the great branches of the sycamores, delicate with May green, swayed with the breeze into ever-changing designs against the blue sky and the drifting white clouds beyond.

Occasionally a rooster crowed off down by the barn, or far away in the pasture a cow lowed, and always there was the whistle of the bobwhite out along the road, or the liquid note of some oriole, to be heard, and the soft chirrupings of the Jenny wrens that were already nesting in Viola's wren house up in a crotch of one of the sycamore trees.

Once in a long while, when a passing automobile would slow up as it passed the house, or a wagon bringing home empty milk cans, the driver would peer into the yard and over toward the barn, looking for a glimpse of Bert or Cindy—or Viola, if he happened to know that she had come—to pass the time of day, after the manner of friendly neighbors. But the Secler place seemed deserted this morning.

Bert Secler's grandfather had built

the house, a solid, yellow-stone, rather pretentious place as farmhouses went in those days, with small, square-paned windows that could be closed up entirely, if one wished, with the green shutters; and he had fenced off the big yard and planted his baby sycamores himself, watering them faithfully day in and day out with painful after painful of water that he pumped himself and carried clear from the well. Bert's father had been born in this house, and five other children. Bert also had been born here, and, although he had tumbled in the green grass alone as a baby, there had been plenty of brothers and sisters later on for a small boy to tease and love, to trudge along barefooted by his side when he went off down to the river fishing or swimming, or in the red autumns to gather into a basket the nuts he shook down from the old shagbark hickory trees back in the timber.

Bert had grown up and married the oldest Compton girl, Lucinda. There were all kinds of Compton girls, eight or nine of them, a big family of daughters, some affectionate and timid and some cold, almost stern, like their father. Cindy was more like him than any of the others, although she had been a handsome girl, but then every one had said that Bert had enough affection for the two of them. Ever since they had stood in the spelling line together in the little country school, it seemed as if Bert had had his heart set on Cindy.

Poor little Mrs. Compton, who herself had been clinging and timid—Flo,



Viola in all her young loveliness had stepped from the train, causing Bert—Bert, a married man, hers, Cindy's, husband—to exclaim aloud: "Great Heaven! Look at her!"

they said, was the one most like her mother—had breathed her last weary sigh in presenting to the world her tiniest daughter, whom she had already named Viola, having given up hope years before of ever naming any child of hers William after its father. And Cindy, who had been old enough to realize the pitiful tragedy of it—who, in fact, had been already engaged to Bert at the time, had never forgiven the baby for her mother's death—or her father.

Indeed, to the young girl, just about to enter upon the greatest experiences of her own life, the shock of the event had been blinding and had overcast with

a veil of horror and dread all the little hopes she had begun to dream about. Desperately she had longed for some one to explain to her the mysteries of the strange existence in which such tragedies were permitted to exist, but no one had. Her father, she had thought, had taken it all much too philosophically. He had even married again, quite calmly, in a little over a year. And so the bitterness and the rebellion and the unexplained wonder had all been locked tight in the girl's heart, even when she had made her wedding vows and had run away with Bert from the laughing guests and over to the new, untried home.

That was why, after seventeen years, Cindy—excepting Viola, who was as yet unmarried—was known as the only one of the Compton girls who had no children. That was why the old yard under the sycamores, where Secler children had played dolls and mumblety-peg for two generations, was deserted now save for the old white cat with the black tail who lay trembling under the blackberry bushes, frightened by Bert's automobile. That was why Cindy, to all the world, seemed harsh and unjust, why, indeed, she was hard and cold, and why she was not understood by the other women round about or by her sisters, especially by poor Flo, whose babies had come so fast, and by Viola, who thought that they were so dear and adorable and fat. Viola loved them just as she loved everything, even Cindy herself, who did not seem to care whether any one loved her or not.

After a long time, the cat, who still believed firmly that it was by a scant margin indeed that his black tail had escaped amputation, summoned enough courage to venture forth very cautiously from his hiding place into the warmth of the board walk, where he might wash his face with all due deliberation in the sunshine. High over his doubled white ear he pushed his laboring paw again and again, moistening it each time as it came around to his mouth with long, steady strokes of his pink tongue, his eyes blissfully shut. Suddenly they opened, widened. He put his paw down. The tip of his tail twitched spasmodically. He half crouched, ready to run again, and then he saw that it was only Cindy coming around the corner of the house; so he rose to mew at her skirts instead, for he had had no breakfast.

"Company coming," Cindy thought, when she saw the old cat washing his face. "Why, look out!" she said to him, as he kept getting in her way. "Hasn't Viola fed you yet? Scat!"

She really felt quite warm, and took off her sunbonnet to cool her head. It had taken her a full hour to find the nest of that troublesome old turkey who had grown very irregular of late at feeding time and who had laid her eggs in a place that she seemed to know, by some sure instinct, would be the very last place that Cindy would think of hunting for them. After Cindy had found them, in a corner of the hedge that bordered the pasture, she was angry with herself for not having looked there in the first place. The whole search had been exceedingly exasperating, and she was indignant with the turkey as well as with herself—also with Viola, though the reasons for this displeasure, last, but by no means least, were far more subtle than her annoyance with the turkey.

Any one who had known Cindy Compton when she was married and who had not seen her since would scarcely have recognized Cindy Secler now. Even those who had seen her off and on for years said that she had changed terribly. Surely no one now would have deemed her handsome; quite the reverse. She was angular and spare, and she did not take the least thought for her appearance. Her faded blue calico dress hung upon her no more attractively than it would have hung upon the nail in her closet, and her shoes were old and broadened and run over at the heels. Even her hair, which had once been as delicate an auburn as Viola's, was now—and that was one of the causes for her strange uneasiness—almost as harsh a red as her sunburned neck, and was just put up on her head out of the way.

Cindy had worked hard; no one could deny that. She had been fair in a certain way with Bert. If she had borne him no children and was not tied down with housework accordingly as her sisters were, at least she had made up for this freedom by doing other work, even

helping him with his. She had raised thousands of chickens and ducks and turkeys, feeding them many and many a time after she had driven to town in the early morning with the milk. Before they had put in their milking machine, she always helped with the milking, and she made a garden, too, and sometimes even worked with Bert out in the fields. A woman whose skin is as delicate and whose hair as fair as Cindy's had been as a girl's cannot work like that for seventeen years and be as beautiful as when her husband married her.

Bert had always protested against it. He had said that he had enough and more than enough to take care of her without having her lift a finger. His father had left them money, and they had accumulated twice as much as they had been left. But Cindy had kept on skimping and saving and working.

To Bert Secler, the brightest spots in those long, monotonous years of toil had been the months of each year when it had been their turn to "have Viola." It had been foreseen, back in the early married life of the new Mrs. Compton, that she was to have troubles enough of her own without looking after the dead wife's children, and Viola's sisters had accordingly resigned themselves to the variously incomplete tasks of bringing one another up. As the older girls had married, one by one, Viola, the baby, had been juggled around among them so that each one might share with the others her fair portion of the responsibility and expense of rearing Viola to an age of dependability upon herself.

Cindy had insisted upon the strict observance of this original plan, despite the fact that Bert always hinted that they, without children of their own, might "just as well keep on keeping her," and she had pointed out in a way she had that left no room for argument that Viola ought, as a matter of disci-

pline, to spend her allotted time with each one in turn, to help with their babies or the housework and thus earn her board and lodging. Cindy herself had always kept a very strict hand over the child while she had had Viola under her administration, and kept her washing dishes or feeding the chickens or gathering eggs faithfully nearly every minute she had out of school.

Poor Bert! Each year he had dreaded Viola's visit a little more, because he knew that it would be just a little harder to let her go when her time came. For fifteen years or so, he had undergone these wrenchings. He remembered how big and empty the yard had seemed, and how deadly quiet the house, that first summer, when Flo and Frank had come and carried away his sunny-haired baby in their spring wagon. She had waved by-by over the back of the seat and puckered up her little face and cried at leaving him. It had been so always; as she turned from a shy midget with curly red hair, playing with dollies, into a demure little damsel who could talk without lisping, then into a little girl with pigtailed, who considered it her serious duty to teach all the kittens how to lap milk from a saucer and who cried her heart out one summer when one of his little brown pigs died, and insisted that it be buried under one of the sycamore trees in a grave dug by himself and marked with a tombstone carved from the cover of a starch box. The summers had been full of memories like that, each one with a heartache in its September when the days grew chilly and the evenings long and they had taken away his little girl again.

This year, when Viola had come to them in May from the sister who lived in the city, the subtle change had come over the girl that had turned her into a woman. Bert and Cindy had not seen her for months, and her visit this year was to be even a little shorter than



It was with a curious sinking of her heart that she beheld the disorder of that room, which told more plainly than words of its occupant's hasty flight.

usual because every one had planned that she should be with Flo, who lived a few miles off, a bit later in the summer.

Viola, young, sensitive, and emotional, dreaded the thought of that approaching visit with Flo. It was really Cindy who had planned it, a little grimly, remembering "others who had had to learn a few facts about life." She had been turning the situation over and over in her mind all the morning as she had searched highways and byways for the turkey nest, and perhaps

it was the exasperation of her search that had helped to harden her determination with regard to Viola's summer plans; partly that, perhaps, but also the vision that would not down of Viola in all her young loveliness as she had stepped from the train a short week before, causing Bert—*Bert*, a married man, hers, Cindy's, husband—to exclaim aloud:

"Great Heaven! Look at her!"

Bert had seemed fairly dazzled ever since. He had hardly seemed to take his eyes from the girl an instant. He

followed her from the kitchen to the dining room when she carried dishes in, and from the dining room to the kitchen when she carried dishes out. He blushed when he looked at her like a great boy, and he praised her openly and told her—even before Cindy—how beautiful she had grown, how pink her cheeks were, how becoming her soft blue dress, how plump and dimpled her elbows. Once he said:

"I declare, Cindy, if she don't look like you used to. Kinda brings it all back somehow."

As you used to! Those were the words that had brought home to Cindy the bitter contrast between them, between them and also between the Cindy she was now and the Cindy she had used to be, so like Viola, in the years when Bert Secler had loved and courted and married her. And in her heart, which was unused to emotion of any personal kind, there woke up a fierce hatred for this sister of hers who had copied her own youth and beauty, who had aroused in her husband the love of those past years.

Altogether, when she rounded the corner of the house, Cindy was in no mood to have the old cat with the black tail tangling up her feet in this way while he meowed plaintively for his breakfast. She gave him a good push, clear off the stoop, and said "Scat!" again and scowled. Where was Viola, anyhow, that in a whole hour she had not finished doing up the work or fed the cat or the chickens, either? For there the hens were, all huddled up against the pickets outside the fence, squawking indignantly and reporting the fact that they had been neglected also.

"Viola!"

Cindy spoke sharply as she shook the flies from the screen and stepped into the kitchen. And then she saw with astonishment that the breakfast dishes were piled on the table just as when she

had left the house. They had not been washed.

"Viola!"

She went through into the dining room, the sitting room; she opened the door that led up the straight, steep, narrow stairs to the bedrooms above.

"Viola!"

She climbed up and went into the back bedroom, which was Viola's. And it was with a curious sinking of her heart that she beheld the disorder of that room, which told more plainly than words of its occupant's hasty flight. Viola's trunk was open; the top tray was tilted over onto the floor, and the contents that were left were strewn untidily about over both trunk and carpet. The bed was still unmade, the closet door open. Cindy went over and peered into the closet. Yes, just as she surmised! Viola's suit case was gone. The girl had taken that with her, then!

How had she gone? It dawned gradually upon Cindy that some conveyance must have borne her away, since Viola would never have set out to walk anywhere from the Secler place, with a suit case to carry, besides. And where was Bert all this time? She hurried downstairs and out to the barn, calling him as she ran. But even before she pushed open the great door that it took all her strength to move, she knew that Bert's big blue Mitchell would not be standing over there against the north wall. And it was not!

When, after a bewildered glance through the barn, she finally turned to walk back to the house, she felt faint and a little giddy, so that she dropped down onto the top step of the stoop and steadied her head with her hand.

The disgraceful, almost preposterous possibility that Bert and Viola had run away together kept recurring, although she strove mightily to drive it out of her mind. Her jealousy insisted upon suggesting little recollections of the past week that seemed suddenly sig-

nificant. Only last night, for instance! She had wondered at the time what they were talking about as they had stood out there under the trees by the gate, Bert with his face flushed and full of emotion as he half bent over the girl and once or twice stroked her bright hair awkwardly with his big hand. And Viola! With her eyes downcast and the long lashes drooping over her cheeks, she had seemed loath to answer the questions he was demanding of her. Had they, then, been planning this flight, right under Cindy's very eyes?

Cindy thought of the exclamation that had dropped involuntarily from the man's lips at his first sight of the girl stepping from the train only a week before, and her lip curled. After all, even after all these years, she told herself that she was not surprised. She might have known that this sort of thing was to be expected of him some time. She had wondered often that it had not happened before.

The memories of the years rushed over her. Most people thought that Bert Secler had borne his disappointment well; there were husbands who were tired of hearing how well. But Cindy did not think so. She remembered always a remark of Bert's that he had made shortly after their marriage.

"You'd ought to have told me this, Cindy," he had said, "before."

"Before?" she had questioned.

"Before we was married," he had insisted, and his lips had tightened.

"It was nothing for us to talk about before we was married," Cindy had answered shortly.

Bert had put his head down in his hands and sat for a long time without replying; in fact, he had never replied. The subject had never been mentioned again between them. But Cindy had misunderstood Bert's disappointment. How should she know that he had been

thinking of his own childhood out under the sycamore trees, of the tramps he used to take off in the woods hunting with his father, of his mother's old gray cooky jar down cellar next the churn, of a thousand and one memories of his own boyhood upon this old farm, for whose continuance he had dreamed in the childhood there of boys and girls of his own?

Cindy, as she sat there now, thought of her own father, of her mother who had died so tired, and of the new wife who had quickly grown old; and a passion of anger swept her against all the men who had ever lived. She pressed her fingers tight over her burning eyes, and even when she smiled suddenly, her teeth remained clenched in a cruel line. So Bert was no better than the rest! And it was Viola, poor little fool! Well, she would learn the truth of life indeed, and even more bitterly than Cindy had planned!

The sun rose higher and higher over the sycamore trees, and a warmth began to come up from the grass, which smelled sweet with the scent of fresh spring warming into summer. The wild grapevine that Grandfather and Grandmother Secler had planted together and trained on the trellis over the pump was in full bloom and buzzing with bumblebees. A few violets that Bert and Viola had brought once from the woods, when Viola was about ten years old, were blue with blossoms in the grass along the fence. Unconscious little things! If they could have known then what the future was to bring to the two who together had planted them there, perhaps they would have died of the transplanting.

Once or twice Cindy thought of the work that was not being done—the dishes to be washed, the beds to be made, the house swept, the lamps cleaned and filled. She had been going to plant some more beets next to the beans and perhaps another bed of let-

tuce. The chickens were not fed or the cat. And still she did not move, but sat there, thinking, thinking, thinking.

At noon, one of the work horses out in the barn neighed shrilly. There was an answering whinny, several of them; also, among the hens, a fluttering of feathers and a low squawking, as if they were all discussing together what this strange neglect might mean. The big Plymouth Rock rooster crowed loudly and waited, his head on one side, to see what effect his mighty effort had produced. He repeated it, and when he saw that he had accomplished nothing, he scattered the hens about in a lordly sort of way and pecked at their findings himself, although there was really nothing there.

So the afternoon wore on, and still Cindy sat on the stoop, without moving, but very tired with the strain of her anger and emotion, so that she sighed often as if she could drop with fatigue and discouragement. She tried to think what it would mean to her and to her plans, what the neighbors would say about it—they would have scant sympathy for her, she knew—and what Bert and Viola would do. But finally she grew so exhausted that she entirely stopped thinking and just sat there, limp, hardly alive, the image of despair.

What time it was she could not have told when, with a quick whirl and a honk, an automobile, which she realized then had been drawing gradually nearer and nearer up the road, suddenly rounded in through their gate and came to a standstill in front of the barn door.

"Cindy!"

It was Viola's voice. Before she even left the car, she called to her sister in a tone of deepest reproach:

"Cindy, why didn't you even call? You could have done that, at least!"

Bert had opened the door silently to

let Viola step out. She was carrying a little white bundle, wrapped in a blanket, and her eyes were red with weeping. And the look on her husband's face Cindy never forgot. She rose, trembling.

Viola, coming up to the house, went on with a sort of defiance:

"If you won't take care of the baby, I will. The neighbors are looking after things at the house, and I thought I could do more by bringing the baby where it was quiet and caring for the poor, tiny thing here. All the girls except you either wired or phoned—or came. Bell is there now, and Jess is coming in the morning."

"What—what baby?" Cindy's voice shook. "Not Flo's—yet?"

"She didn't find your note!" Bert exclaimed, and the relief was strong in his voice.

"Why, I left it right in the dishpan!" Viola protested. "How could you miss it, Cindy? Didn't you see it when you went to do the dishes? Where were you, anyhow? We called all over the place, for hours and hours, it seemed to me. Frank had told us to hurry. So finally Bert said we wouldn't wait, but he'd decide what to do when you called up as we told you to do. And then you never called at all! It made a perfect ninny of him, sitting there all day, waiting for you!"

Viola's indignation was coming to the front again.

"When was Flo taken sick?" Cindy asked suddenly. "How is she now? What—"

"Why, that's why they phoned us so soon. She—died!"

Cindy felt Bert's strong arm around her while she recovered from the suddenness of the shock. He made her sit on the porch step again, and he smoothed back her hair from her forehead with the same loving gesture with which he had smoothed Viola's the evening before out by the gate.



"What—what baby?" Cindy's voice shook. "Not Flo's—yet?"

"We shouldn't have told you so sudden," he was saying contritely. "But we never thought but what you'd get the note Viola left. I can't see yet how you come to miss it."

The unexpected and startling turn events had taken made Cindy's head reel. She was unable to answer yet. And still, in spite of the confusion, she was conscious of a great relief—and of a purifying, overwhelming shame—that her unworthy suspicions had been so groundless.

She held out her arms for the baby.

"What is it? A girl or a boy?"

Viola's young face hardened a little.

"A girl—and Flo named it Lucinda after you, just before she died, because she said maybe you'd love it if it had your name."

A dull red crept into Cindy Secler's face as she bent over the tiny thing, unwrapping the blanket from about the wee head to hide her emotion. Once, in the very few months years ago before her own mother had died, when she had dreamed the sweetest of all dreams, she had used to wonder whether Bert would want to call a baby daughter of theirs Lucinda after her. She had hoped that he would, and she had made a few vague, but very tender, plans for the new Lucinda that might some time be. All at once Cindy's arms tightened around the baby, and she crushed it up close to her breast.

Viola, who had stood up bravely all day under the strain, suddenly began to sob, and with the relief of the tears,

gave way entirely and threw herself down on the porch beside Cindy with her arms about her sister's neck in a storm of weeping.

"I never want to get married now!" she cried stormily. "Never! I'm going to write and tell Billy so!"

"Was you going to get married?" Cindy asked, astonished. She patted the girl's head with her free hand in rather an embarrassed way.

"Viola was telling me about it last night," said Bert. He stooped over and touched the girl on the shoulder. "Come, Viola, you mustn't feel that—that way about things."

He seemed genuinely distressed. Was Viola's life to be thwarted in the same way, that Cindy's had been—and his?

"You're going to marry him just the same," he told her gently. "If he's like what you told me, he'll be good to you."

But his own face worked with feeling. This, the only daughter he had ever known, he was trying to persuade into marrying away from him forever. She would visit them, of course, but it would never be the same. And still he leaned over her, patting her shoulder soothingly, speaking a man's good word for that other, younger man whom he had never seen, but whose happiness was hanging in the balance now as his had once hung when there had been no one to speak for him.

"If he loves you and you love him, he'll be good to you and it'll be all right."

But the girl shook her head and buried it deeper on Cindy's unaccustomed arm.

"It will never be right!" she moaned with the despair of youth. "Nothing will ever seem right again after this!"

"Look at the baby, Viola," urged Bert, with an inspiration. "Look at it lying there. You can't feel hard toward that little, wee thing, can you?"

He pulled back the blanket a trifle, and the two sisters gazed down at Flo's motherless baby, very frail and utterly helpless.

Suddenly Cindy spoke:

"Viola!"

Her voice was clear and determined.

"Viola, if you're a true woman, you're not going to starve that Billy's life as—I've starved Bert's. It happened the same way to me as it's just happened to you—only it was my mother. When she died and you was left——"

"Oh, Cindy! Oh, Cindy!"

"You see?" Cindy asked.

The girl nodded. She was thinking hard and learning suddenly this sister whom she had never before understood. That other time, she herself, Viola, had been the baby lying there.

"Who's going to take this baby?" asked Cindy, looking up at her husband.

"He don't know yet. Frank told me he just didn't know. He could get on somehow with the others, he said, but what to do with this baby he said he didn't know. He just don't know. I was sorry for him."

"It's name's Lucindy," she said, with a queer, almost shy smile on her face.

Still Bert, looking down on her, was silent. He was afraid of what she had just said to Viola, afraid lest he had heard it wrong, lest it had all been a mistake, lest he should spoil what was about to happen by saying the wrong thing.

"Shall we—take it?" Cindy asked unsteadily.

Bert tried to answer, but the words would not come. He dropped on his knees and buried his face in his wife's lap where the baby lay, his big shoulders heaving with the emotion that had risen beyond his control, while Viola sat gazing at them, her young, tear-stained eyes burning with questions that only the years could answer.

Mrs. MacMichael *and the Baron*

By Edith Summers

Author of "Adventures in Bohemia," "The Primrose Party Dress," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY V. SANDBERG

How much should a woman suffer and forgive before "the last straw" breaks her? Mrs. MacMichael can tell you, in her rich Irish brogue.

IT was Mrs. MacMichael's habit to sing to herself as she "did up" the rooms. She was making my bed, spreading the covers with her strong, capable hands, smoothing out and tucking in and folding down with the speed and precision of one to whom long use has made the performance semimechanical. As she vigorously shook up the pillows and smoothed them again into decent shapeliness, she crooned softly to herself:

"Oh, I lost my love an' I care not.
He wad come back, but he dare not."

And as she gave a final smooth and pat to the white counterpane, she interrupted her half-unconscious crooning to make a remark, turning toward me her handsome, healthy face and fine Irish eyes.

"She's shure got a bit bee in her bunnit, miss," she began in that rich, soft, North-of-Ireland tongue whose idiom is more than half Scotch. "She tells me airly this mornin' that she's engaged to him. The bare idea, miss! Whin a dark an' polished Eyetalian baron, wi' supernatural shiny rings an' pins, comes a-courtin' to a lady who doesna talk good grammar, somebody, miss, is bein' bamboozled, an' it's no the Eyetalian, neither. Mayhap you'll say I dinna talk good grammar mysel', miss; but I ken the sound o't when I hear't, an' Madame Angelicky's no one that talks it.

"The way fule wimmin, more especially widders, miss, will go daft over

self-seekin' men is a caution. Men is queer an' onsteady critters, miss, an' they gae licher wi'out a woman taggin' onto their coat tails, as many has to learn to their cost, miss. Them that joins fortins with them is takin' a risk that it's disturbin' to contemplate, as none knows betther nor mysel' that's had my own lessons to learn along them lines. An' so I bin a-tellin' her, miss, up yon in her room whilst she was a-dustin' her mug wi' pink powder. But I couldna lead her into the sense o't. The throuble is she's a bit—flighty—ye know. Though the livin' Lord knows her heart's pure gold, an' she's been the best kin' o' a friend to me, miss. Albeit, though, there's summat wrong here."

As Mrs. MacMichael was in the act of tapping her forehead significantly, there came a light knock at my door, which opened and disclosed the all too dazzling complexion and unnaturally golden coiffure of Madame Angelique herself. She came in with a little kitenish bounce and an immense surge of heliotrope perfume. Mrs. MacMichael, having finished her bed making, went out, closing the door behind her.

"A little—er—queer, you know, my dear," said Madame Angelique, in the voice and accent of Connecticut, putting a much-beringed forefinger to her brow and glancing at the same time toward the door through which Mrs. MacMichael had just made her exit. "But just the dandiest housekeeper I ever had, and a dear, good soul, too. Ain't

she a queer talker, though? She's just been lecturing me for fair. And that brings me to what I dropped in to tell you, honey. The baron and me are engaged!"

She paused and blushed like a school-girl under her rouge.

I felt painfully embarrassed, but I managed to stumble through some form of congratulation. It was not yet a week since I had become a lodger in Madame Angelique's select furnished-room house, and, accustomed as I was to the cold shoulder usually met with in New York, the lady's frank and gushing confidence rather staggered me.

She slid luxuriously into a rocking-chair beside the open window, arranging the folds of her pale blue silk kimono with stubby, but sparkling fingers.

"I feel so happy, my dear," she confided, "and yet a little sad, too—naturally. I can't help thinking of my dear, dead first husband, and what a great help he has been to me in my business."

"Indeed?" I said, mustering up a show of interest. "In what way?"

"In every way, honey," returned Madame Angelique. "It was him that told me how to build up this whole establishment. Lots of people say the story's impossible and foolish, and that I must have imagined or dreamed it. But I know better. Of course you believe in spiritualism?"

I started to frame up an answer, but Madame Angelique mercifully cut me short.

"Naturally you must. All really advanced people do nowadays. By the way, the baron is a mahatma, too—something like a yogi, you know. He knows all about the Hindu science of breath and concentration and things like that, and he's going to teach me. Don't you think the occult is perfectly fascinating? Well, it was through a spiritualistic communication that my whole life was changed. It was my dear, dead

husband, *after* his death, who told me of the great flesh-reducing discovery."

She paused a moment to give this last the weight it merited, and then continued.

"You'll hardly believe me, my dear," she said with evident complacency, "when I tell you that I was once so fat that life itself was a burden to me. I couldn't walk, eat, or sleep with any comfort. Then my dear husband died and there was a lot of trouble with the life-insurance people; and in my bereavement and poverty, I grew stouter yet with grief and worry about money matters. I used to sit in a chair all day long—for I was too fat to move about—and pray to be taken to join my dear husband. One day I was sitting there all alone in the twilight, praying the Lord to take me, when suddenly it came over me that James—Mrs. James Peevy is my real name, you know—had flown right down through the ceiling and was there in the room over my head. I looked up and couldn't see a thing; but all at once out of the dark there came the sound of his dear voice.

"'Courage, Lizzie,' said he. 'There is life! There is hope! Fataway will do it; and this is the recipe.'

"And with that, my dear, if you'll believe it, he told me all the things to put in and how to mix them. And to-day I'm a well woman with a good figure, if I do say it, and a bank account that wouldn't disgrace any titled lady."

The last idea evidently wakened soft emotions in Madame Angelique's bosom, for she blushed again and pleated the blue silk of her kimono with her jeweled fingers.

"The baron is awfully interested in spiritualism," she continued, raising her large blue eyes, "and we're going to have a séance to-night. He intends to bring a friend with him, and I want you to come down and make the fourth. Now don't say 'no,' for I simply won't



As Mrs. MacMichael was in the act of tapping her forehead significantly, there came a light knock at my door, which opened and disclosed the all too dazzling complexion and golden coiffure of Madame Angelique herself.

hear it. I can tell you right now that you'll find it *very* interesting and instructive. The baron, my dear, is simply a mine of knowledge. Well, now I must hurry away, for there's two autos stopping at the front door right now, and that means at least two customers. I've always made it a rule, my dear, never to let pleasure interfere with business. And so au revoir till this evening."

She gave me a playful tap on the

cheek and rustled away, leaving a good share of the essence of heliotrope behind her.

She had not been gone many minutes when there came another tap on my door, and Mrs. MacMichael reappeared, this time on her carpet-sweeping rounds. She found me washing out a pair of white silk gloves.

"I can get ye summat, miss," she said, glancing over my shoulder, "that'll take the spots off them finger ends a

deal quicker nor that fancy complexion soap."

She went out and returned in a few seconds with a large tin cup full to overflowing with a whitish substance that looked and smelled like cold cream.

"What is it?" I asked, poking it with a tentative finger.

"It's Fataway, miss. It's fine for all cleanin' purposes. For scrubbin' there's no its equal."

"Fataway!" I exclaimed in astonishment. "But I thought Fataway cost ten dollars for a half-pound jar!"

"So it do, miss, to thim that don't know what's in it. There's thricks in ivery thrade, miss; an' this is Madame Angelicky's little thrick. There's nae-thing costly in Fataway, miss—only but twa kinds o' laundry soap an' summat to make it smell sweet. It's the dietin' an' exercisin' an' steamin' that thins them down, miss, not Fataway. But if they didna hae't, miss, they'd feel they werena gettin' their money's worth. Mayhap I shouldna tellt ye that, miss; but somehow the thruth will out o' me system in spite o' mysel'. An' betwixt you an' me, it'll do no manner o' harm.

"Like enough," continued Mrs. Mac-Michael, after a pause, "she's been tellin' ye that tale about how she come by the knowledge o't. She's tellt that bit lee sae oftern, miss, that she's come to believe it as firm as she's a livin' woman. Thruth to tell, I wouldna say but that she's always believed it, she's that ready to take up wi' all manner o' foolishness about supernatural things an' the like. An' that's why she's so easy a victim for that bit whippersnapper o' a designin' baron.

"She kens well," she went on, running the carpet sweeper vigorously over the floor, "me own ill fortin in marryin'. An' it ought to be a warnin' to her. But it wad seem that folks has to learn be their own folly."

"Did he drink?" I asked.

"Shure, miss, he dhrank, like all that's Irish. But I was niver one to hold that up agin' him. Dhrink comes nateral, miss, to a male Irishman. It's like askin' a duck not to go near the wather. But what he done was this, miss—he up an' left me when I was laid up in bed wi' sciaticky, an' niver a cint i' the house, an' the twa weans whinin' about me bed for summat to pit i' their stomachs. He's no come back to me yet, miss. I misdoubt he niver will."

"I shouldn't think you'd ever want him to come back," I returned, with some warmth, "after he treated you in that shameful way."

"Well, miss," returned Mrs. Mac-Michael, carefully dusting my plaster cast of the Venus de Milo and setting it back in its place on the mantelshelf, "I'm no sayin' that I want him back, an' maybe if the thruth was knowed, I don't. But it's curious how a woman'll keep a foolish, soft spot in her heart for a man, an' her a-despisin' him all the time, too.

"The throuble begun whin I first come out here to Americky. Ye see, we'd made it up i' the Auld Land whin I was a slim slip o' a girl an' he was a love-makin' young gallant, fair compected, but good appearin', too. They shure was lovely, miss, them sweet summer evenin's when we two used to go a-strollin' down be the river bank, wi' the smell o' the bonny hedges i' the air an' Dan a-whisperin' to me that I was the only one i' the whole worruld for him, an' me believin' him, miss. Days like them soon goes by, miss, but the memory o' them's like posies in a Harlem basement whin ye're older—an' some wiser, miss. An' I'm thinkin', miss, that it's mostly the memory o' them courtin' days that makes a woman keep sort o' soft an' foolish about a man even when he's no done the right thing by her.

"Soon after we was promist, away

wint Dan to Americky to make his fortin. An' afther a couple o' years, whin I'd saved up a bit o' money, I came along afther him. I felt some fearful in me heart on the passage over, for I'd been real slim when he went away, an' in they twa years I'd growed most surprisin' stout. It rins i' the blood o' the O'Tooles to git stout young.

"I'm no like to forget the mornin' I landed here i' New Yawrk, an' there was Dan waitin' for me on the pier. He lookt twicet before he really knew me; an' I lookt twicet at him. For I'd had a idea he was a bigger man nor what he was. He'd seemed bigger i' thim young days. But there standin' on the pier he looked real undersized, an' wi' a wee bit o' hair on his upper lip about the color o' a scrubbin' brush. At last he come up to me, his jaw sort o' dthroppin' an' a disappointed look in his eyes, an' he says: 'Seraphy,' says he, 'can this be you? If I'd 'a' knowed ye was sae big, I wadna had ye to come oot.'

"'If I'd 'a' knowed ye was sae wee,' says I, the tears startin' into my eyes, 'I wadna 'a' come oot, sae there, an' bad cess to ye!'

"I didna mean a word o't, ye ken, miss, but I felt that saddened an' lonesomelike, to think that yon should be the first worruds he spoke to me afther sae long.

"Well, we patched up that first quarrel, an' we wint to a parson an' got marriet, an' in a Harlem flat we lived for nigh onto three years. An' me boy an' girl come, that's now such fine up-standin' weans, if I do say't.

"We lived fairly peaceable most o' that time, for I was niver one to nag an' quarrel. But there was no more love-makin'; an' always in me heart there was a ache o' lonesomeness iver since he said that about me havin' growed sae fat.

"He was remarkable onsteady in his habits, often not comin' home nights at

all, an' rarely keepin' a job more'n a week at a time. He got mixed up in politicks, too, like the Irish does here, an' his bit brain begun to fill wi' high-falutin' notions. Sometimes he'd come home wi' a roll o' bills that ye couldna hold i' yer fist; an' ither times for weeks together he'd loaf around an' be ornamental whilst I took in washin' an' ironin' for to keep the weans in food. When I'd ask him why he didna keep a stiddy job, he'd say he had a artistic temperament an' steady jobbin' wasna for the likes o' him.

"Well, miss, one time when he'd been out o' a job for nigh onto a month an' no money comin' in but what I brung, I got cold an' was took down wi' sci-aticky an' rheumatism in me arrums an' legs. Dan come home that night a bit the worse for lickier, an' not findin' a hot supper waitin' for him, wint out ag'in. An' from that day to this, miss, he niver come back."

"How did you ever manage to get out of the awful fix he left you in?" I asked.

"Well, miss, that's all along o' Madame Angelicky, bless her good, kind heart! I'd been doin' fine ironin' for her off an' on for some time back; an' the next day afther Dan lift for good, she climbed up the stairs of me flat wi' some money that was comin' to me an' found me i' bed an' the two weans peevin' an' cryin' for a bite to eat.

"The grass didna grow under her feet, miss, I tell ye that. She hadna took a good glim aboot before she was awa' an' back wi' a dochter an' a nurse woman an' a grocery boy loaded down wi' bundles. She stayed there hersel' wi' me most of that day, heartenin' me up wi' beef tea an' hot gruel an' amusin' the children an' makin' everythin' that pleasant an' cheerful that it was a wonder for to see.

"Ivery day afther that she'd come up an' bring me bit delicacies. An' that month she paid the rint an' the gas an'

the grocer's bill an' all the ither expenses.

"Thin whin I was up an' around again an' goin' back to the washin' an' ironin', she says to me one day, says she: 'Why not come an' be housekeeper for me? It's easier than washin', an' betther pay.' I thinks to mysel': 'That's a rare idea! I'll go an' housekeep for her an' I'll no take a cint but me food an' the weans' food. An' by so doin' I'll show me gratitude for the deeds o' kindness she's done for me.'

"But land o' livin', miss, wad she hear o' that? Not a whit, miss. She pays me forty dollars reg'lar ivery month, besides a' me livin' an' the weans' livin', an' I'm layin' up a neat bit sum for their schoolin', bless their hearts! She's a gude woman, miss, is Madame Angelicky, an' none knows it betther nor me. She'll pass the pearly gates, miss, ahead o' many that wears their own hair an' complexions.

"I was fair stunned, too, miss, whin I found I'd come into a place for reducin' fat. It seemed like the hand o' Providence, miss, an' me that was cravin' so to be rejuiced. For I always blamed a' me troubles an' disagreements with Dan onto that fatness. If ye'll believe me, miss, I've steamed an' fasted awa' thirty pounds. But there's no worrud come from Dan yit, though I left directions at the flat where he cud find me."

"You don't mean to tell me you'd go back to him now, Mrs. MacMichael?"

"We-el, miss, I'm no sayin' I wad—an' I'm no sayin' I wadn't. Men is queer critters—an' wimmin, too."

That evening, about half past eight, Madame Angelique rustled into my room in all the glory of a pink satin evening gown, four bracelets, and an emerald necklace. The lamb on its reluctant way to the slaughter was not more loath than I, but there was no escape. She piloted me down the stairs

and into the ornate reception room where during the day the peculiar virtues of Fataway were explained with professional suavity to patients whose exceeding wealth was only surpassed by their exceeding corpulence.

The baron was there waiting for us, as dark and polished and perfumed and diamond-glittering as it was possible for a baron to be. The table was waiting, too—a light one—in the middle of the floor, with four chairs set about it.

"I'm awfully sorry, baron," cooed Madame Angelique, "that your friend couldn't come this evening. It always works better with two gentlemen and two ladies, don't you think? But I've sent down for Mrs. MacMichael. She's my housekeeper, and a mighty good one, too. We'll have a try at it, anyway."

The baron turned down all the lights until the room was in semidarkness. Mrs. MacMichael came in by a side door, and we all sat down at the table, the baron opposite Madame Angelique.

"I'm moved to say at the start," said Mrs. MacMichael to the company in general, "that to my thinkin' it's a' foolishness. But I come wi' a open mind an' willin' to be convinced, an' so ye can go on wi' yer doin's for all o' me."

She sat up very straight and rigid in her chair and planked her hands down on the table as if they were two of her own flatirons.

"Sh-sh!" hushed Madame Angelique and the baron in unison; and for some minutes we all sat in tense silence, waiting for the unexpected to happen.

Once the single low gas jet gave a slight flicker, and Madame Angelique started as if a ghost had suddenly tweaked her back hair and gave a sharp little nervous scream.

"I—I thought it was a manifesta-tion," she whispered.

"'Tis but a bit stir o' wind," Mrs. MacMichael assured her in a stolid, matter-of-fact voice.

For another period of several long minutes we sat in silence. Then, when we were least expecting it, a tremor seemed to pass through the table.

"It's moving!" whispered Madame Angelique, with suppressed excitement.

Another and more perceptible tremor stirred the table. Then suddenly the legs on Madame Angelique's side lifted themselves from the floor and the whole table tipped perceptibly toward the baron.

"His marvelous magnetism!" gasped Madame Angelique.

The air seemed thick and tense with supernatural vibrations.

Then all at once Mrs. MacMichael leaned forward.

"Me lad," she said sternly, "y're pullin' on't wi' yer twa fists. I was watchin', an' I seen ye as plain as the nose on yer face, which isna over sma'. Think shame to yersel' for deceivin' a innocent an' thrustin' lady! Is yon the way a titled gentleman is used to act in thim furrin parts that ye hail from?"

The supernatural spell was snapped. Madame Angelique was too astonished to speak. She only gasped and uttered an inarticulate gurgle. The baron rose from his chair and pulled out his watch.

"I do not understand," he said with a sort of nondescript foreign accent that



"Take that," she said quietly, "ye low, sneakin', snivelin' cur—for the auld days!"

consisted principally in a slight pause between each word, "what this foolish woman may mean. But it is useless for us to trouble our minds with it to-night. The spell is broken. To-morrow we may have better fortune. Meanwhile, I have an engagement. I have the honor, ladies, to bid you good evening."

He took his hat, bowed low, and had passed through the door before Madame Angelique could recover breath. Mrs. MacMichael, to our astonishment, got up and followed him out.

The next moment we heard their voices on the steps outside. With one accord, we rose from our chairs and went to the open front windows to hear the end.

"It's a right smart git-up, Danny," Mrs. MacMichael was saying, "an' that scrub-brush-colored hair an' beard o' yours is dyed most artistic. But I couldna help but ken ye on near sight be that scar on yer left cheek, there where ye fell agin' the nail that night ye were sae gladsome wi' lickie. I'm no for doin' ye ony harm, Dan, nor standin' in yer way. But I couldna in nater sit by an' see ye bamboozle a gude-hearted woman that's been the friend to me that that gude lady has."

"Seraphy," said the baron, with a strong brogue that matched Mrs. MacMichael's own, "ye've spoilt me game, an' I'm no blamin' ye. But I was stakin' me all on this, Seraphy, an' I'm put to't to know where I'm to turn to. If ye'll believe me, I've got but two dollars to me name this night."

Mrs. MacMichael ignored this last piece of information.

"Have ye no worrud," she said, "to ast me how I bin gettin' on a' these years, an' you that left me wi' no a penny to bless mysel'?"

The baron shifted his position uneasily.

"Ye was incompatible, Seraphy," he said at last. "The ways o' you an' me is betther parted."

"Gin that's yer opinion," returned Mrs. MacMichael, "I'll no contradict ye. But wad ye no wish to know if the twa weans be dead or livin' or to git a glim at their bonny faces—yer own twa weans that's flesh o' your flesh?"

"Nae doubt they're well wi' you, Seraphy. It's useless for to see them;

they wadna know me frae a mile-post."

There was a pause, and the baron again shifted his position uneasily.

"I'm hard put to't," he said at last. "Could ye no loan me a bit money, Seraphy—for the sake o' the auld days?"

Mrs. MacMichael looked hard at him a moment. Then she went up the steps into the house. The baron still stood on the lower step uneasily, apparently wondering whether she intended to return. Once he made a motion as if to go; then changed his mind and turned back, looking up expectantly at the front door.

It opened at last, and Mrs. MacMichael came down the steps holding something in her hand.

"There, Dan," she said, holding it out to him, "is me stockin' savin's. I've got a bit in the bank, too, but that's to be saved for the weans. There's siven-ty-three dollars an' eighty-one cints, ivery bawbee that I've got i' the house. May it do ye gude."

A relieved light passed over the baron's face.

"Seraphy," said he, slipping the money into his hip pocket, "ye're a gude woman, an' nae doubt the Lord'll reward ye. Good-by to ye, Seraphy."

He made a hurried movement to go, but Mrs. MacMichael stopped him.

"What's yer hurry?" she asked. "Wait a wee. The night's but a boy, an' ye'll no be meetin' me again sae soon. Seein' ye're sae willin' to take the money, I'll gi' ye this, too."

There was a sudden sharp report, the impact of Mrs. MacMichael's large, powerful hand on the baron's face.

"Take that," she said quietly, "ye low, sneakin', snivelin' cur—for the auld days!"



Presbery Steele's Conversion

By F. C. Bundy

ILLUSTRATED BY R. VAN BUREN

The story of Miriam Day and Presbery Steele, and the lesson Miriam learned in regard to love and marriage.

MY friend, Heyne, looking out of his dark, amused, sophisticated, foreign eyes upon certain excessively advertised features of the life of Greenwich Village in the City of New York, is wont to say, in regard to a form of quasi-domestic relation alleged to be somewhat practiced there—"the free union"—that the trouble with it is merely that, in all human transactions, one party "is liable to be a skunk."

"If men and women were always high-minded, yes! Then I grant you that the free union would not spell disaster to any one's happiness or work disintegration to any one's character. But what will you? If men and women were always high-minded, marriage with book and bell, a bishop and eight bridesmaids, would also work out to perfect satisfaction! You can't invent, either in Greenwich Village or in the Latin Quarter or in any other place where you try experiments in human relationships, a form that will insure against heartache, disappointment, treachery, tyranny! Believe me, it is in the nature of the parties, not in the form of the contract between them, that you find the potentials of happiness or of woe. These little people are amusing, with their insistence upon the importance of the absence of form."

Heyne is a comparative newcomer in the Village. The story of Miriam Day and Presbery Steele was written before he took up his semiscoffing abode among us; before, indeed, the free-unionists proclaimed themselves,

or the old-fashioned district of winding streets and gable roofs awoke to find itself grotesquely famous in the Sunday supplements and its sober-going citizens, its tradesmen and its artisans, learned that in the newspaper census of the region they no longer counted, that only the self-advertising "artists" and philosophers of the new day were recognized as existing. For it is nearly ten years since the history of Miriam and Presbery began in Giovanni's basement restaurant, and it is two since it reached its predestined conclusion in a place remote from that smoke-darkened, olio-odoriferous cave.

Miriam had come to New York, after a fashion that was considered more or less adventurous in that period of the world's history, to make a "career" for herself. Up in Ontiesco, where her father taught economics in Wardour College, and in his idle hours speculated delightfully on the valuelessness of all human institutions, and where her mother had no time at all for speculation, being busily occupied in making a small professorial salary clothe, feed, and pay the dentistry bills for a large family—up in Ontiesco it was declared that Miriam had an undoubted talent for art. The outcome proved Ontiesco not so misled in its instinct as such places frequently are about their daughters and their sons—but that comes later.

Miriam, having, by the grace of Heaven, a talent for line and color, and, by virtue of being a professor's daughter, the mature judgment to manage her

own existence at twenty, came to New York, accepted a boarding house recommended by the Y. W. C. A., to which her clergyman had in turn recommended her, registered at Frederick Hassler's class for instruction, and then took a little portfolio of drawings from office to office, in order to persuade some art editor that she could draw sufficiently well to justify him in putting her on his pay roll. For the Wardour salary absolutely refused to stretch itself to the point of supporting Miriam in New York in addition to all the rest of them in Ontiesco.

Miriam, circulating among advertising concerns, found an art editor who looked at her drawings favorably, and at herself not at all, thereby reversing the process she had encountered in a few former offices. He conducted, as a side issue to advertising, some sort of a struggling little sheet designed chiefly to market a new brand of paper pattern, and he was glad that fate had sent him an artist of negligible commercial experience. He took Miriam on his staff at a small salary, and promised her that, in lieu of more money, she might have the privilege of attending Hassler's classes on the appointed afternoons. And Miriam went back to the boarding house recommended by the Y. W. C. A. in a golden dream of pictures hung beside those of Rosa Bonheur, and sat up half the night reading the life of Angelica Kauffmann, which she had drawn from the library of the same excellent institution.

She was extravagantly happy, and she wrote home letters simply overflowing with gratitude to her destiny and with ambition and dreams and affectionate plans. At that period, she scarcely noted the holes in the stair carpet she climbed to the fourth story of her dingy, brownstone dwelling, or the heavy, clammy odors that clung to the halls; she was humorous about them and about the weekly smearing of her

room miscalled "cleaning" when she finally did come down out of the clouds long enough to perceive them.

After a while, when life began to assume its normal colors; when she found that the hours at *The Boudoir and Pantry* were longer than she had been promised; when she was beginning to discriminate among her fellow pupils in Frederick Hassler's class and to discover that not all of them were cut out by nature for her soul mates; when she had even had one or two intimate and illuminative glimpses of the great man himself, and had perceived that he was only partly a demi-god—when these things had come to pass, she was able to see various shortcomings about Mrs. Lorimer's boarding house. The half cleaning of her room lost its humorous aspect; the pale color of the flavorless gravy became a grievance instead of a pleasantry; the dimness of the gas, the inquisitiveness of the boarders, the fact that the third-story bathtub urgently required another coat of enamel paint—all these things grew, before the end of a year, to seem unendurable.

She spoke of changing her boarding house and was informed by Experience, in the person of fellow students, that she would change none of her trials by merely moving. And Antoinette Jarvis clinched the matter by inviting her home to dinner the night before Mrs. Lorimer served the ptomaine-infected halibut.

Antoinette lived in a tiny flat on one of the streets winding through Greenwich Village. The apartment house was new, and had the cleanly smells of fresh varnish and new plaster, instead of sad reminiscences of long-eaten dinners; the stairs leading to Antoinette's little set of packing boxes were concrete, instead of being carpeted with greasy, ancient, musty wool. The place ravished Miriam, and when, the next day, the deplorable and nearly

fatal accident of the halibut occurred at Mrs. Lorimer's, her mind was promptly made up. She, too, would have a clean, tiny place of her own, down in Antoinette's quaint district; perhaps she, too, would be able, like Antoinette, to catch a glimpse of sunset among chimneys and towers, over a low roof next door. And she would have a gas stove. And she worked busily with a pad and pencil demonstrating to herself that it would all cost no more than Mrs. Lorimer's homicidally mismanaged boarding house. In mathematics of this sort, it is a trick to help the balance by adding to the side of the assets hope and determination. By the use of these, Miriam was able to make her columns tally quite neatly.

Once again, for a while, everything was charming. Every one knows that all the world eats too much—digs its grave with its teeth, acquires a stomach and loses a waistline, and all the rest of it. Miriam found that the far-famed continental breakfast, even when not followed by the continental *déjeuner à la fourchette*, served her forenoon needs admirably. The Ontiesco idea of sausages and buckwheat cakes was abhorrent! Coffee without cream and sugar, two hard-crusteds rolls from the nearest French bakery, and she was prepared for a forenoon at the offices of *Boudoir and Pantry*; after a luncheon at the counter of a near-by dairy restaurant, she was prepared for Frederick Hassler's classes. And then she was too tired to cook that nourishing little dinner which she had promised herself when she moved from Mrs. Lorimer's—that tiny, juicy steak and that mealy baked potato.

Occasionally, when she was invited to a real house to dinner, she had enough to eat. Semioccasionally, when she invited some of her friends to dine with her in the tiny little coop, she had enough to eat. But five days out of the seven, she went about insufficiently

nourished, and therefore ready to become the prey of any sentimental or morbid notion that might be afloat in the neighborhood. And even ten years ago, there were numerous sentimental and morbid ideas afloat in Greenwich Village—which is, as Heyne tells me, merely to say that there were numerous poorly fed young persons afloat there. He always maintains that it is not the crop of bodily ills, but the crop of intellectual *isms*, following in the wake of malnutrition that ought to alarm humanitarians.

Well, Antoinette, before she married Johnson and went away to Ohio, introduced Miriam to the occasional substitute for the juicy steak and the mealy potato—she introduced her to Giovanni's dish of spaghetti Milanaise, served in Giovanni's basement. There was no question about its toothsome-ness, its hotness, its void-filling character. Whenever Miriam thought she could afford dinner there—once or twice a week it was—thither she repaired.

Giovanni's was among the earlier of the Italian restaurants that have infested Greenwich Village. He began it primarily for his fellow countrymen of the district, the big tribe of young lawyers, doctors, wholesalers, clerks, and the like, who lived in the streets trailing off south and west from the Square. It was for them that he decorated the walls of the basement dining room with gaudy scenes supposed to be illustrative of home—with a preposterously purple Bay of Naples above the tinkling old piano on one side; with the gloomiest collection of Roman aqueducts that ever showed their ruins upon any campagna over the mantelpiece; with an amazing Etna behind the desk at which Eleanora, his wife, vast, dark-eyed, tranquil, and smiling, sat at the receipt of customs. It was those execrable frescoes that had attracted the aliens of Antoinette's sort; they declared that

Giovanni's was quite the most wonderfully *Italian* Italian place in all New York, and by and by, living up to this reputation, he became the bohemian fashion, and introduced three banditti in the guise of Neapolitan singers, doctored his Chianti with logwood, employed more waiters, and grew prosperous.

All this happened in Miriam's day, but nothing occurred to spoil the spaghetti, and she continued to come there even when Antoinette had gone the way of the feminine world of youth and freedom and art, and had departed for domesticity.

One night she came in alone, as usual, and slipped to a little table in a distant corner, under a prismatic sketch of an Italian Alp. The restaurant was rather crowded that evening. The diners were rather noisy. There had been three or four cabs outside—testimony to the fact that "uptowners" were within. Miriam looked at them with the distaste they naturally inspired in the haughty and exclusive denizens of a neighborhood already taking itself rather seriously. Pietro, her waiter, placed before her a little plate on which lay curled the very smallest herrings that the wizardry of language had ever converted into sardines.

"Red wine, or white, signorina?" he asked her, and Miriam answered, as usual, "Red."

There was not much to choose between the flavors, but she liked the glowing color of the red wine in her goblet when she had mixed it plentifully with water.

The little herrings had been whisked away, the thick soup, with its plentiful sprinkling of cheese, had been gratefully consumed, and Miriam was dreamily awaiting the spaghetti Neapolitaine, when her attention was drawn to a table near her own. It was drawn by the very obvious regard of its party for her. Four young men—not Ital-

ians, not of the neighborhood clientele—were dining there, and they had elected to make Miriam the recipient of their glances and the object of their conversation.

They were rather tipsy—they had indulged in other drinks than Giovanni's red and white Chianti. They had had cocktails at the little bar dividing the dining room from the kitchen, and with their dinner much sparkling sweet wine, and after it variegated pousse-café; and now they were commanding highballs in noisy voices. With insolent lavishment, they had tossed dimes to Giovanni's minstrels, who had, of course, swiftly pocketed them, though with answering insolence of eyes. And now they were favoring Miriam with an extreme and meaningful attention. Miriam, it happened, was the only woman dining alone in the restaurant that evening, and Miriam, as I think I have forgotten to say, was darkly, gravely, youthfully beautiful.

By and by one of the tipsy youths, after a deal of conversation with his friends, summoned a waiter and told him to furnish the young lady alone in the corner with a small bottle of Asti spumante. The waiter was torn between conflicting views of his duty. He felt it a crime to let an order, bringing in money to the till, go unfulfilled, but he feared what the Signora Giovanni, vast and tranquil and smiling behind the desk, would say if the signorina were annoyed. However, perhaps she wouldn't be! She was a sensible signorina, that one, and Asti spumante was a good drink. So, somewhat surreptitiously, he bore the wine to her.

Miriam looked at him in smiling reproof.

"It's not for me, Pietro," she said. "You've made a mistake."

"Pardon, signorina, but yes," he whispered. "It is from the young gentlemen yonder."



He threw the contents into the flushed face of the tipsy young man nearest to him.

In spite of herself Miriam's eyes traveled in the direction Pietro's nod indicated. All the young men were gazing straight at her; all were smiling expectantly; all had their glasses raised in an attitude of fellowship. Miriam was only twenty.

She started to her feet. Her face was crimson with annoyance, with mortification. Hot, angry tears trembled swiftly to her eyelids. She did not know how to comport herself with equanimity under the insult. She made

a movement forward, but Pietro caught at her dress. For the black eyes of Pietro's mistress were directed significantly toward the corner where the girl had risen.

"Oh, no, no, signorina!" Pietro besought her. "Oh, no, no!"

And at that instant a long body interposed between Miriam's table and the table of the four bold gallants. A voice, attached to the long body, said:

"I beg your pardon, madam, but I take it you have no use for this?" The

"this" was the bottle of foaming yellow wine, which Pietro still grasped by its neck.

"I have not," gasped Miriam, and a hand attached to the long body took the bottle from Pietro's nerveless fingers, knocked the head off with a neat, precise blow, and threw the contents into the flushed face of the tipsy young man nearest to him.

"If you will send more bottles," announced the voice attached to the long body, "I will see to it that they are all treated exactly alike."

Of course there was a howdy-do. Giovanni came rushing from his kitchen, cook's cap and all. The other waiters, the Neapolitan singers, the diners, the tipsy young man, the signora—although she did not come immediately from behind the desk—were all heard at one and the same time. Of course what they each said was quite indistinguishable.

Eventually it became apparent that Giovanni was threatening to summon the police and to have Heavens knows what punishment visited upon the four starters of trouble. But he compromised upon their immediate ejection, after he had charged them two or three prices for everything they had eaten and drunk. They went away vowing, as many have done before and since, that bohemia was by no means the land of good-fellowship and charm they had been led to believe it. And Miriam could not follow her inclinations, and go also, because all the rest of the company were insisting upon apologizing to her, and because the signora, finally inducing some one else to come mind the till, stepped Juno-like from her place and sat down at the embarrassed girl's table.

"I maka you," she said, after she had said various other things indicative of strong Latin emotions, "acquainted with him who is your champion dis night—de Signor Steele."

And despite Miriam's murmur of protest, Presbery Steele, who had returned to his solitary table, was summoned and presented to Miriam. Miriam had to tell the signora her name before the ceremony was completed.

"I see you dese many tima," said the signora, "an' always I say I will aska you de nama. An' not till now do I do dat. Signor Steele I know dis longa time."

"She knows my name, Miss Day," explained Presbery Steele with a laugh that was more a matter of flashing blue eyes than of his mobile lips, "because I've so often had to hold them up—Giovanni and the signora—for the price of a meal. They simply had to know who I was. It argues your financial solvency that they have never learned yours."

Miriam was still a little tremulous from the excitement of her recent encounter. She smiled mistily upon her new acquaintance. She listened to the signora's mellow laugh and amused contralto commendation:

"He always pay pretty soon."

By and by—just how Miriam never knew—she and Presbery Steele were climbing up Giovanni's area steps together into the pleasant April mildness of the street. He walked home with her, confiding a great deal of his personal history to her as he walked. He was, it seemed, a newspaper man; he had interviewed almost all the notorious murderers of the past five years—and most of the other great ones of earth. He worked on a morning paper; Wednesday was his day off; he expected to report a presidential nominating convention early in the summer. He liked New York—it was the only place. He meant to own his own paper some day—about five years hence. Balzac was his favorite author; Balzac knew life, he did! He, Presbery, didn't care for music—opera, that was; he liked ballads and simple, touching

things all right enough. Didn't know much about art except the comics. Might he come to see her some time?

It all sounds rather cheap and ordinary as it is related, but with Presbery Steele uttering it, the sound was quite different. Miriam heard it as delightful, boyish, buoyant music; it was large—it swept aside nonessentials, like opera and art, and concerned itself with essentials, like ambition and joy. And she said that he might come to see her some night.

Presbery Steele liked Miriam's little apartment, which was the tiniest thing in New York—just two rooms, a kitchenette, and a bath. The rooms were the size of packing boxes, but Miriam had learned the trick of making them seem homelike—however the women manage to do it!—with a cot divan, an easy-chair, a swinging shelf of books, and another of blue willow dishes from the five-and-ten-cent store, a cotton rug, and some geraniums on the window sill. And her window faced the west, as she had hoped, and looked across the low roof of the old-fashioned house next door to shreds of sunset floating among the chimneys and towers.

When Presbery found—as he did on the occasion of his first visit, for he was absolutely direct, and what he wanted to know he asked—that she paid only twenty dollars a month for all this, he decided that he was overcharged in his lodgings, and that he would move. There was another group of packing boxes vacant—the group that Antoinette had left—and he promptly leased them. Miriam could hear his footsteps on her ceiling, when he came in from work at two or three o'clock in the morning, and it was the shortest possible time before she loved the sound, and learned to wake and to lie listening for it.

There is this to be said for Presbery: He made no secret of the fact that he

had no use—the expression is his own—for marriage. Marriage hampered a man, tied him down, clipped his wings; and a man—a journalist, at any rate, and a journalist in his youth—must be strong-winged and free. Miriam agreed with him heartily. Freedom has always been the flaming watchword of youth and art. Besides, Miriam was not in love at once, and Presbery was not for a long time. The difference in their states of mind was indicated by the fact that she sometimes spoke proudly of their comradeship, their unemotional, intimate intercourse, rejoicing, verbally at any rate, in the broad-mindedness that permitted it, without entailing responsibility upon either of them, whereas he took it all for granted. Miriam was thrillingly conscious of a dramatic situation; Presbery was intent, quite without deliberation, upon doing as he pleased. It never occurred to him to analyze such a normal condition.

But they were young, and both of them were vibrant with youth and its urgings. And Miriam, dark and beautiful, began to glow like an alabaster lamp lit from within; and Presbery, with his laughing blue eyes and his laughing mouth, with his black hair tousled above his broad forehead and his flashing white teeth—well, Presbery was, at twenty-six, a man at whom all women looked twice. And their meetings were unchaperoned, and no one cared what they did. New York is always full of those young drifters, unrooted in its soil, although removed from their own.

It was, perhaps, with the thorough-paced egoist, Mr. Presbery Steele, rather a question of propinquity and indolence than of passion, in the beginning. He hadn't noticed that Miriam was beautiful; he was too absorbed in himself to notice anything outside himself that was not absolutely flamboyant. But Miriam felt for him the first love

of a young, idealizing soul. And it was summer, and they were adrift in New York, unrooted to any substantial soil of family or circle or tradition.

They used to go off on day's excursions together to the remoter parks and to the near-by beaches. They took along books and shawls and a hamper of luncheon, prepared by Miriam. She was palpitantly aware of him—his nearness, his good looks, his high spirits. And one day, through the heavy armor of his egoism, his self-absorption, there pierced the knowledge of her palpitant readiness for love; and upon that second of illumination burst the fact of her beauty. He was stretched out upon a beach they had discovered on Staten Island. It was one of those days when the heat hangs, a palpable haze, over land and water. He put out his hand and found hers. He held it close as it fluttered and struggled a little within his. He drew her down to him until he could reach her lips with his own.

"Miriam!" he murmured. "Sweet-heart—"

Well, as Heyne would say, there was no particular harm in that. Probably a thousand beaches reproduced the scene, the words, the emotions, that hot, hazy August day. It was but the way of youth and fecund summer, natural, not to be gainsaid. And some of them married and lived happy ever after; and some of them parted that evening and didn't see each other again; and a few went on like Miriam and Presbery Steele, giving and taking, giving and taking—

She went to Ontiesco for a decreed two weeks' vacation at the end of the month. She hated Ontiesco; she was bored by her family, except when her father, idle upon the piazza after golf, would deliver amusing little expositions on the valuelessness, the ephemeral nature, of all human institutions. Professor Day's learning was consid-

erable, and he wore it lightly, a mere feather of adornment in his cap. Miriam loved to hear him talk, loved to hear him whimsically put church and state, business, marriage, and society, where they belonged in human evolution!

The first Sunday after her return to New York, she and Presbery went up the Hudson for their day's outing. Presbery had missed her, if not as poignantly as she had missed him, at least enough to infuse considerable fervency and earnestness into his greeting of her. They took a boat up between the Palisades; they feasted their eyes upon each other's young grace and beauty; they talked in broken sentences and their eyes finished that for which language held no words.

Where they disembarked—at an intermediate landing between New York and West Point—there was a wood. They wandered in it for an hour, and made an idyl of luncheon. In the afternoon came a swift thunderstorm, and they were driven for shelter to a hotel near the boat landing. It was one of those places that do a two-month business—a July-and-August resort. There was no one left in it of its summer population; the management was getting ready to depart; there were only two or three servants. The storm died down to a steady rain. Miriam's drenched muslins had dried on her before a fire that the clerk had ordered kindled in the sitting-room fireplace. She would only be drenched again if they ventured out, even down to the landing, to take the steamer on its downward trip. They looked at each other. The friendly clerk opined that his wife could fit the other gentleman's wife out for the night if they decided it was best to stay. Again they looked at each other, their hearts dissolved in their eyes.

"Thank you," said Presbery. "That will be fine. We'll stay, then."

By November, Miriam had had ample opportunity to test the genuineness of her convictions upon the subject of freedom in marriage, or in nonmarriage. She was proud and she was just. She admitted to herself that Presbery had always told her he did not believe in that institution, commended of St. Paul, for ambitious young men, and she admitted that she had heartily agreed with his theories. She could not claim, even if she were inclined to self-pity, to have been deceived as to his purposes. And she was proud; no matter how she loved, no matter what the situation, she wanted no unwilling, no merely duty-driven husband. Yet she suffered. An inexorable sense of justice and a stalwart pride do not prevent torment.

She hoped, of course. She told herself that she was daily making domesticity attractive to the uncaught, untamed, wild spirit of the man. She kept her little place charming, and she kept herself the center of its charm. They often had dinner in her little living room now, instead of going out to Giovanni's, and she thanked her guiding stars that she was her mother's daughter, trained in her mother's kitchen. She knew how to cook! And Presbery had an appetite, and, more than that, a discriminating palate. She admitted to herself that it was ignoble, but she practiced her domestic arts as a lure. She grew years older as she struggled to win her lover to such appreciation of a home that he would be



She threw herself into his arms and sobbed and sobbed, telling him that she could not bear it, she could not bear it!

willing to ask her to make one for him with the sign and seal of the law upon it. She had, in her intent and prayerful study of Presbery, disquieting glimpses of him, but she put away the meaning of those flashes of insight. She would not see him cheap, shallow! She could not!

A little before Christmas Presbery told her, with some embarrassment, that he was to be sent to Italy to do a special series of Sunday articles on the labor

troubles then raging there. He had, for some time, been specializing on labor news and he knew Italian. Miriam breathed deeply and averted her eyes lest he should read their prayer. With all her strength, she besought Heaven to make him want her to go also, but not to let him see the violence of her longing. She was still true enough to her theory of freedom not to want to win him through duty or pity.

Presbery was glad of the averted eyes. They made it easier for him to tell her how much he was going to miss her and how much he wished that she were coming, too, impossible as that was! And having paid that decent amount of tribute to the sentimental necessities of the moment, he went on to tell her exactly what it meant in his career to be sent on this mission.

He sailed in two days. Miriam bore herself in a seemly fashion until the very last moment. Then, when he was coming down the stairs early on the morning he was to sail, her door opened and her face, white, hollow-eyed, lined with grief, showed in the aperture. Brokenly she begged him to come inside the hall; there she threw herself into his arms and sobbed and sobbed, telling him that she could not bear it, she could not bear it!

When he had unloosed those clinging arms and had made his escape, Presbery wiped the sweat from his forehead. He had been horribly shaken by her misery. But he was annoyed, too. How illogical she had been to choose that last hour for a scene! Why, if she had only let him see at the first how she cared, he might have managed—what? Oh, something!

But he knew, even while he was impatiently protesting in his thoughts against the time of her outburst, that it was the outburst itself that annoyed him—the collapse of dignity—the open suffering. They implied that the re-

lation between him and Miriam had been something more responsible, more coercive, than a summer's day *amour*. And, in so far as Presbery Steele had defined his philosophy of love to himself, it was that only such affections and passions were to be tolerated as promised easy egress when life attempted to make them binding. "The strangle hold" was what he called marriage. He was intensely annoyed to find that there had been something in his affair with Miriam which had partaken, to her mind at least, of that bond.

He did not breathe quite comfortably again until the *General Boulanger* was in the lower bay. And when he did breathe comfortably, he found that the sentimental, soothing loneliness and longing for Miriam that he had expected to accompany him overseas was so strongly tinged with annoyance and fear and the sense of peril just escaped that—well, really, that his feeling had changed!

The sea was smooth, and he went down to dinner with a good appetite. There was a sort of refugee banker at his table—a financier whose trip abroad was aptly timed to escape the probable questioning of an inquisitive and inquisitorial commission. Presbery struck up acquaintance with him and paced the deck with him after dinner, quite absorbed in the joyful exercise of his reportorial faculty. He was glad of the chance to analyze at closer range than he had had previous opportunity to do the psychology of that sort of man.

Meantime, Miriam, in the little box of a flat, did not see the sunset smoldering behind the towers and chimneys. Her face was still swollen with weeping, her puffed lips still quivered. She had not eaten all day. And she sat, guiding a trembling pen over sheets and sheets of paper, striving to tell Presbery how sorry she was that she

had not been "brave" at the last, that she had given him a troubled mind to carry away, when all she desired was to be help and strength and joy to him!

II.

It was varnishing day at the Clifton Academy of Art. Clifton, as perhaps you remember, is a seashore settlement so popular with artists that a roster of its summer inhabitants reads like that of the National Academy of Design. The converted cottages of fishermen house some painters; large, new stone and stucco villas give others habitation; boarding houses fairly ooze with those among them who have not yet arrived at the prosperity requisite for individual ownership of dwellings. And not only are all the coves and cliffs along the rocky shore of the blue sea dotted with their dwellings, but the marsh rivers, creeping inland, pass country cottages and old farmhouses where they gather, which they have fitted out to new uses. Nowhere else in America, so the learned declare, are such atmospheric effects to be had as along that favored coast, with its brilliancy of sunshine alternating with sad gray days, and with wreaths and wraiths of fog. And every summer, all the artist colony unites to give an exhibition, the proceeds of which go to the widows and orphans of the native Clifton men who are lost every year off the Banks.

On either side of that particular set of rocks and coves that make up Clifton, the beautiful shore is almost entirely laid out in the summer residences of those whose professions are more remunerative than the artists'. Stately houses, lying in the midst of great green stretches and high above the opalescent sea, they string themselves along by the mile, north and south of the more crowded asylum of the painters. And to the annual Clifton art exhibition, these palace cottages send forth their denizens by the hundred.

Miriam Day had been of the Clifton summer colony for three seasons before she met Carter Wright. It was mere chance that had led her thither—chance and the friend who had shared her habitation during her hard-working two years in Paris and her summer vacations in Normandy. When Sara Judd had returned to the United States, a year or two after Miriam, she had sought out her former companion, and after one visit to Ontiesco she had declared that that was not the proper environment for the young artist during her summer holidays.

"Charming for a rest," she had said, "but not for a stimulation. You don't need three months' rest—your classes aren't as wearing as all that. A month of idleness at home, and then you come to my cabin down Lobster Lane at Clifton."

Sara Judd had bought a little fish shed at Clifton years before, when it wasn't the thing above all others for an artist to do; she had fumigated it, and applied turpentine and paint until the odor of salt cod was partially overcome; she had planted honeysuckle and pink ramblers to help in the work of deodorization; and she had farsightedly retained possession of her holding during the years of her wandering abroad. Miriam had agreed to share the little briny box of a place with her friend. She was greatly attached to Sara, who was fifty, and who had been to her like a cool, soft ointment upon a burning wound when she had first managed to save enough money to go abroad to study, two or three years after Presbery Steele had walked out of her life.

On this particular varnishing day she was in the Clifton Art Gallery—which occupied the second floor of the new fireproof Odd Fellows' block on Main Street—engaged in the congenial task of admiring her own work. She was twenty-eight or nine, and the promised

loveliness of her youth had been fulfilled. She was round, yet slim. Her dark hair had delicate tendrils that caressed her broad, low, white forehead and her lovely white neck. Her face was dark, healthily pale, exquisitely oval. Her eyes were really beautiful, in color, shape, and expression; they had glints of gold in their darkness; they had a melancholy, a gravity, that was noble and memorable; and yet they were often shot with the radiance of amusement, mockery—with sheer gayety. It is quite impossible to be continuously melancholy when one is well, strong, still in the twenties, and succeeding in a beloved profession.

The picture before which Miriam lingered longest was of an old lady in a cottage garden—a plain old lady in an old-fashioned calico frock, with old-fashioned white hair parted above a kind, wise old forehead. The eyes were blue, and there was a clump of blue larkspur in the garden, and in the background there was a suggestion of sea at the foot of the lane on which the garden opened. It was very satisfactory color, very cleverly introduced, and Miriam could not but come back to it again and again. She was proud of that old lady and her garden of hollyhocks and larkspur! "The Garden by the Sea," she had named it.

A deep-toned voice broke in upon her happy, conceited survey of her painting.

"I beg your pardon," it said, "but can you tell me whose work that is? I have come away from home without my glasses, and without them I am blind for reading fine signatures."

"It is by Miriam Day," said Miriam, blushing a little.

She had turned to face the speaker, who proved to be a well-set-up man of thirty-five or six, very clean cut and strong as to jaw and nose and forehead. His eyes were as blue as the old lady's, and his hair was dull straw

color, like oat grass that has long lain out in the weather.

"Thank you," he said. "A rather striking piece of work, don't you think?"

Miriam smiled.

"Naturally," she answered. "I am the painter."

"Oh, indeed! I am in luck. I am Carter Wright, over from Magnolia for the occasion. My friend, Frederick Hassler, sent me a ticket for Varnish Day. Do you know him?"

"He's my old teacher," she answered.

Carter Wright! It was a name with which to conjure that season—all seasons, indeed, in the opinion of many. For it was the name of the district attorney of New York during one of the not infrequent periods of extreme storm and stress in the police department of that city—a district attorney who was wealthy, highly lineaged, and possessed of various other equally desirable qualities. Miriam was a trifle fluttered by the announcement of his identity. He had just done something very spectacular and important in his office, in the pursuit and capture of a criminal escaping from his jurisdiction—one of the wealthy criminals, too! Her dark eyes glowed as she looked at him. He, for his part, was again intent on the picture.

"It's a portrait, isn't it?" he asked.

"After a fashion. She's a dear, the old lady. She lives on the Bentley Road, out toward Sand Point. I used to hang over her fence to watch her garden. It's a splendid mass of bloom all the summer through. Finally, after we had grown to know each other, I asked her to let me paint her at work in it. She said she already had a very nice picture of herself, a crayon enlargement, and didn't really want another taken, though she would admire to have her posies reproduced. However, I persuaded her, in time."

Her lips were curved in a faint smile

of affectionate amusement as she turned her eyes again toward the pictured garden and its owner. Carter Wright's own keen glance—doubtful only for close print—studied her dark, delicate face.

"That is the way I want my mother done," he announced abruptly. "In her garden. She has—crayon enlargements, too." He laughed. "I mean, she has had a due number of perfectly correct portraits done—in her wedding dress forty years ago, in a court dress fifteen years ago when my sister was presented in London, in black velvet and her ancestral stones five years ago. And I have never liked one of them. I've always wanted a portrait—a sketch, let us call it—of my mother in her garden. She has a charming, old-fashioned one that is the joy of her life. She spends hours in it, working and reading, talking—living. Will you do her there, for me?"

Miriam was astounded, amused, and a little aghast. She had not supposed that district attorneys acted with the impetuosity of small boys. Yet it had not been altogether an unconsidered impetuosity. She had felt those bright, steel-blue eyes of his appraising her and her work, and appraising the work, at least, so she felt, at its true value. She laughed uncertainly.

"Please look around the whole gallery, Mr. Wright," she said, "and see if there aren't other garden patches with old ladies in them that will enchant you even more."

"I'll look around with pleasure," he answered promptly. "But I'm quite in earnest in asking you to do a garden portrait of my mother. I shan't want any of the others. You see"—he turned again toward the sunny picture, crowded with color and perfume, over which the plain old presence seemed to brood benignly—"you have made that woman's face express the wisdom of her years, their hardships—

and the happiness her flowers give her. As if, somehow, those flowers compensated for many things that seemed more vital. Do you understand me? Sometimes, when I was younger, I used to look in perfect amazement at my mother whom life had treated—oh, as life can treat a proud, strong, fiery nature—but who actually seemed to think that everything was all right as long as she could clip her roses. You've got that in your picture there—that sense of the mystic values. How did you learn it?"

Under the pale olive of Miriam's cheek rose red ran; her dark eyes darkened more deeply.

"I didn't know that I had done it," she answered simply.

She looked again at her painting. Did that old face, wrinkled and happy and wise, with its years of inevitable suffering behind it—did it tell something that she, Miriam Day, had learned without even being aware that she had learned it?

"Well, will you do my mother?"

"If she wants me to," answered the woman, bringing her half-affrighted gaze back from the canvas to her new acquaintance.

"She'll want you to!" he prophesied. "She— Shall I tell you a secret, Miss Day? She always wants what I want."

He had a gay, confident air of intending all the world to want what he wanted; yet he had surely had to fight for many things in his career. She pondered about him.

It was already August. The sittings in the garden at Magnolia had to begin at once. The Wright motor used to worm its way into Lobster Lane and, threatening the fence of the cobbler who lived across the narrow road, to back and turn while Miss Day made ready for her trip to the big summer place down the shore. She was pleased, jubilant, over the commission, for al-



"I'm quite in earnest in asking you to do a garden portrait of my mother. I sha'n't want any of the others."

though she had succeeded beyond her old girlish hopes, there had not flowed much wealth into her coffers from her pictures. She enjoyed the thought of the money and of the renown this portrait would bring her. What a foolish child she had been, eight years ago, to imagine that life had nothing left for her but bitter heartache, the scorching sense of degradation, and an abysmal loneliness! Even in thinking upon her own clouded, youthful vision, she

winned. The memory of that dead time still had the power to make her sick with humiliation, sick with the miserable sense of abandonment.

What, she sometimes asked herself, especially as she drove smoothly through the sea-and-flower-scented August mornings, each as perfect as a crystal globe of dew—what had kept her alive in that time when Presbery Steele had gone away and when week after week had passed without a word

from him. Her cheeks were scorched with the memory of all that she had written—the long, loving, abject letters of the first two or three weeks; the understanding, gallant letters that followed; the indignant ones that came next. And he had been away for four months before he sent her a miserable little scrawl about how busy and important he was— Oh, how had she borne it?

Well, she had borne it. Instinct, if not will, had made her fight for her life again when it had seemed destroyed, thrown aside upon some mean heap of outcast things. Out of that old fever of wretchedness she had crawled, as it were, into a state of apathy that had seemed like peace. And by and by she had found herself doggedly at work, doggedly living, living—

And now she was whole again, sane, proud, happy! Her pictures had been a real feature of the Clifton exhibition; learned critics were beginning to do whole articles on "The Art of Miriam Day;" a Western art gallery had bought "The Garden by the Sea," and she was doing a garden portrait of Carter Wright's exquisite, stately, proud mother for him. She wished some one—a bar association or something—would give her a commission to do a portrait of him. She would like to study that clean-cut, powerful face of his for all its meanings. And thinking of his face with its look of eagle strength and aspiration, she recalled Presbery Steele's, and the hot blood stung her from throat to hair at the indiscriminating judgments of her silly girlhood. To think that she should not have recognized the cheap, the meretricious, at sight! To think that she had not known weakness, self-indulgence, the cold cruelty of the sensualist, when it had flaunted itself before her in full lips and negligible chin! To think that she had once melted to the very recollection of that face, which

now she blushed ever to have thought wonderful!

One day she awakened to a sudden realization of what was portended by her constant contrasting of her old lover's looks with those of this new friend, this patron. And when she awoke to that realization, she declared, with instant decision, that she needed to make no further garden studies of Mrs. Wright.

She told herself that she was not in love again—of course not! For had she not definitely ruled love out of her scheme of life when she had finally understood that Presbery was through with her, years ago? Therefore it was obvious, was it not, that she could not be in love with Carter Wright?

It was not safe to weep in the cottage in Lobster Lane; her room and Sara's adjoined, and Sara's ears were no less sharp than her eyes and her tongue. Yet she felt the need for weeping—such need as she had not felt since that morning, a thousand years ago, when Presbery Steele had gone off on the *General Boulanger* and she had been left, torn, broken-hearted, in that tiny flat with the sunset-looking windows. She told herself that she had to cry for all that that poor little fool of a Miriam Day had foregone forever when she had yielded to her first, eager, girlish longing for love. She wanted to find a place where she could weep for that.

She found it—a nook between the cliffs where she often came to read and dream and feel the spray upon her face. And she wept as heartbrokenly as if she were weeping the loss of love that day for the first time.

It was there that Carter Wright found her, tear-stained and swollen. Sara Judd had given him a hint where Miriam was likely to be. He had come because, on his arrival at Magnolia the night before, his mother had told him that Miriam was through with the gar-

den sittings, and because, hearing that, he had found the situation suddenly, keenly, unendurable.

"I love you," he told her in his abrupt way. "I suppose I fell in love with you that morning before your picture. I've been a dolt not to know it before——"

"It isn't four weeks," gulped Miriam.

"Four wasted weeks," he insisted. "For you do—you do love me, do you not, Miriam?"

"No," she quavered.

She was shaking as if in a chill. She would not meet his eyes. She tried not to hear his words. If she could but cling to that one simple lie, then, by and by, she would be at peace. He could not keep on tormenting her if she could only succeed in making him believe that. She couldn't marry him—oh, she could not marry him, though she loved him, loved him, loved as she had not known she could love in the old, unreal days! She could not marry him. She would never marry him leaving him in ignorance of that poor, stained, crumpled page of her early love story—and never, never, would she tell it to him. She would never mix with this love of his for her a feeling of contempt, a feeling of pity. Better forego everything that life could hold of happiness, honor, and fulfillment, than endure to read his shrinking in his eyes.

After a while he gave it up.

"I don't believe you, you understand," he informed her. "I know you love me—else I couldn't care in this fashion for you. There is some justice in the world! However, I shan't bother you any more now. You poor child, you look worn out! But I shall never give you up. I'll pursue you as if—as if you were a criminal, my dear! And you know I don't let them get away from me!"

She shivered, and he apologized.

"I'm a tasteless imbecile. But I

shan't give up until a better fellow wins you. And you'll let me see you? If I don't bother you too much——"

"Oh, yes!" she breathed, raising grateful, moist eyes to his face. "Friends, we can be friends——"

Her soft, parted, tremulous lips were so alluring to him that he bent toward her to kiss them. But he gripped his resolution hard. He must win her, not seize her, his exquisite, dark lady!

"Friends," he answered huskily, his hand upon hers. "Friends—with a hope."

III.

To understand all that happened during the next six months, one would need to be a psychological expert, a pathologist. One would need to be an authority on religious emotion or mania, that mystic force which moves the mob to "hit the sawdust trail," or whatever they call it.

Miriam came back to New York in September, and so did Carter Wright and his mother. Miriam was agitatedly happy. She was firm in her inner determination never to marry Carter, for it would have been impossible for her to marry him without confessing that miserable little story of her youth. And it would have been equally impossible for her to confess it. She knew, in that incorruptible center of the spirit where the ultimate truth is known, that he would never regard her with the same eyes after hearing that tale. He might still love her, she admitted, might still desire to marry her, might "forgive" and make every logical excuse for her. Yet his feeling would be changed. Pity would have mingled with its pure equality at best; contempt would have poisoned it at worst. She would endure neither outrage to her pride.

For—and at this she sometimes marveled—she knew that she was, in very truth, the woman she seemed, the gifted, honest, open-hearted creature

whom Carter Wright believed in and loved. She was that, and not the thing his knowledge of her affair with Presbery would immediately make her appear in his eyes. She allowed Carter to know a truer, more real person in allowing him to know her as she appeared than he could possibly know should she lay her history before him. If she let him know that episode into which passion and ignorance and loneliness had led her—an episode that had, of course, helped to shape her—then he would never see her truly again; always the shadow of that confession, of that knowledge, would cloud the clear light in which she was now revealed to him.

Some day, she supposed, he would weary of this friendship of theirs which was now so satisfying, so joyous, to her. He would grow greedier for a home, a wife, children; he would be attracted to another woman, and the wonderful days would be past. Yet not utterly past; she could still be his friend, she *would* still be his friend. She could even be the friend of that shadowy figure, Carter's wife! So long as she was able to be to him exactly what she appeared, so long she could have his friendship. By and by it would not be so ardent, of course, so absorbing to him; by and by, life would take him away from her. But his unclouded affection and belief would be hers always. It was enough—or, if it was not enough to satisfy the craving of her heart, at any rate it was more to her than possession would have been with that flaw in it which would be inevitable if Carter knew.

Why, then, since she believed so completely that the Miriam Day who presented herself to him was the real woman, and that the admission of the existence of that unhappy, abandoned girl of long ago would be merely to falsify the truth—why, then, was she

not willing to marry him without telling him that episode?

"I can't play the game that way!" she said passionately to herself.

It mattered nothing that she knew, or supposed, that there were youthful dreams and ardors in his own past concerning which she felt no resentment, no curiosity, no retroactive jealousy. He was a man, and the code read in one way for men and in another for women. That was all; there was no more to be said about it. If she had been married and widowed, married and divorced, then it would have been otherwise. In such a case, the purity and reality of Carter's devotion for her would never have been sullied by any taint of pity, scorn, or doubt. Only the one thing that had happened to her held that hideous power to destroy the truth.

So she accepted the situation and so she went on happily enough; while Mrs. Wright, with a sigh, resigned herself to the prospect of losing her wonderful son to some one under the rank of princess royal; while the Days, at Ontiesco, sensing something of the situation with that clairvoyance of families, sighed with relief. In spite of the professor's theories and toyings with strange doctrines, they all had worried over Miriam's persistent spinsterhood, holding that no reputation and achievement in mere art could compensate a woman for the loss of marriage. And Sara Judd, smoking her cigarettes and watching Miriam with hawklike eyes from her studio across the hall in the old Sheraton studios, hoped that the girl wasn't going to be fool enough to make injudicious admissions, after all these years.

"She's been a wonder," said wise Sara to herself. "When she first struck Paris, tragedy, stark and unashamed, looked out of her eyes. But she never opened her tight, pretty young lips about it. Usually, what makes me sick

in women is that they want to tell you the sad story of their lives. But not Miriam! I liked her so well by and by that I should have weak-mindedly let her talk had she shown the inclination to. But she didn't, ever, bless her soldierly heart! Well, if only she doesn't go and spoil everything with Carter Wright by thinking—and saying—that she can never love again!"

In many years, now, it had not occurred to Miriam to wonder where Presbery Steele was. Their correspondence had died very early after his departure for Italy. For a year she had subscribed to the newspaper for which he corresponded, for the piercing pain and pleasure it gave her to see his name at the head of a column of foreign correspondence. But by and by she had ceased to find it; and, anyway, she had been so occupied in the reshaping of her own life that she had given up the futile practice. And consideration of his part in her affairs had no weight in her decision in regard to Carter. Presbery Steele, she knew, or thought she knew, would be discreet enough in his references to her. He had prided himself rather naively in the old days on understanding the whole code of the gentleman. Their paths were unlikely to cross, even if he were again in New York. Presbery belonged to the ephemera of the city's life, she felt, rather than to the substantial, grounded part. Most newspaper men were like that—skimmers of the froth of the community's life, not essentials in it.

And then, one night when she came into her studio, she found a note from him. It was unbelievable. She stared at the writing for a long minute before she opened it. She was tempted to throw it into the fire unread. But, after all, why? It was even possible that she was mistaken, that that handwriting, with the unconquerable flourish at the end of the letters, was not his; she might have forgotten. She tore it open.

No, she had not forgotten. It was Presbery Steele's writing; it was his name at the bottom of the note. She stiffened with anger. He had read, he said, of her winning of the Derwent prize in the Winter Academy, and he had even gone up to see the picture. It was a fine one, and he wanted to congratulate her. Might he come up some evening—he had found her address in the telephone directory—and have a talk? He had been very much away from the United States for some years, or he would have tried to see her before.

"The insolence!" said Miriam to herself. "The insolence! Now that I am happy, successful——"

She wrote to him briefly, saying that she was obliged for his congratulations, but that she was too much occupied to receive visits from him.

"I suppose even his conceit will gather what I mean!" she said violently, as she stamped the letter and ran with it at once to the mail chute.

She slept ill that night, from anger and agitation.

The next morning she was half sorry for her curtness, for the morning papers told of a motor accident out on Lafayette Boulevard. Three newspaper men and three women, returning late from Tarrytown, had cast a tire while going at a high rate of speed. Miraculously, in the overturning of the car that had followed, none had been killed, but two had suffered severe injuries. One of those seriously hurt was Presbery Steele.

Poor wretch! Well, he would not be able to read her reply to his note for some time; there was that consolation! But the thought of him obtruded between her and her work, between her and her happiness, between her and her plans, all day long. Occasionally, during the next week, she called up the hospital to which he had been taken, to inquire as to his condition; and when

at last she heard that he was out of danger, she essayed to dismiss him from her thoughts. And she found, to her horror, that she had thought, in some dim, subterranean darkness of her mind, that, had he died, she would have felt otherwise toward Carter. With Presbery out of the world, she half believed she could have gone to Carter. It would have been—she knew not why or how—different. It was not because, alive, he meant anything whatever to her; it was not because, alive, he was dangerous to her peace and dignity. She didn't know what it was. But she realized that Presbery Steele's death would have released her from the penance she had imposed upon herself for the crime that had, after all, been his!

And it was then that the Reverend Jerry Jaspar took his place, all unwitting, among the personages in Miriam Day's story. The Reverend Jerry was a barnstorming evangelist, who, beginning in a small way in rural communities where the excitements were comparatively few, and camp-meeting religion therefore popular, had increased his vogue and his income by adding mill cities to his list. He had a rare emotional quality and he could induce hysteria in women and men, and could crowd the mourners' benches at his meetings until there was no room for another sinner to be saved. He believed, as he declared several times a day during his revivals, in the old-fashioned religion, the old-fashioned hell, and the old-fashioned devil. Some people thought he believed in the last two more deeply and fervently than in the first; at any rate, he worked fear overtime in making his spectacular conversions. He knew sin chiefly in the crude, old-fashioned forms—drunkenness, lust, dishonesty, lack of faith in divine Providence and in Jerry Jaspar.

Some more conservative New York clergymen, whose pews were painfully empty on Sunday mornings, got to-

gether and discussed the advisability of inducing Jerry Jaspar to come to New York and start a great religious revival, in the after-reward of which their sparsely attended churches would share. A fund was raised, a vacant lot found, a huge tent erected, and the Jerry Jaspar revival was in full swing at about the time that Presbery Steele crawled out of the hospital and back into the *Chronicle* office.

Presbery's injuries had affected him curiously. They had not seemed alarmingly serious, and his recovery had been normally speedy. But he didn't, as he himself confessed, "seem to get back his nerve." He was apprehensive, fidgety, brooding. He slept badly, and was troubled even during the hours in which he managed to sleep with nightmare recollections and expectations. To Presbery Steele, the Sunday editor of the *Chronicle* assigned the task of a "Jerry Jaspar special," the main feature of which was to be an intimate study of the man and his methods, by Presbery himself. Then there were to be illustrations by the *Chronicle's* best artist, a symposium of views by clergymen and professors, an interview with Jerry Jaspar's wife, and a compilation of his favorite dishes by the editress of the woman's page. It was to be a great number.

Presbery attended the revival meetings in the pursuit of his livelihood. Not even in his depressed and nervous condition would he have dreamed of attending them otherwise than as an assignment. But he attended them, and on the third night the other reporters present had the excitement of seeing him, flushed and wild-eyed, making his way to the mourners' bench, and of hearing him accuse himself of wallowing in sin.

"Nutty! Clean nutty!" they told one another. And they spoke of the accident, and of Presbery's shaken nerves since his return from the hospital.



Miriam stood up, quite straight and very beautiful, when he had made himself horribly, hopelessly clear.

Of course, he could not write his "story" of Jerry Jaspar. He was possessed by the convert's one-sided zeal—he could not see the evangelist except in the light of a savior. Some one else wrote the big page special, and Presbery haunted the canvas auditorium, confessing to more and more unguessed and unspecified blacknesses of soul each night, and declaring a more and more fervent determination to make amends for his crimes. The old-fashioned religion of the old-fashioned preacher claimed him for its own.

IV.

Miriam was entertaining a family party. Her father and mother were down from Ontiesco for the Christmas holidays, and they were having a beautiful time. They found it very agreeable to be the parents of a young artist whose feet seemed securely set in the path toward high distinction; a popular young artist, too, whose friends had all manner of pleasant things to propose for spending the time; and a young artist who had, obviously, an attached and adoring suitor in a most eligible

man. Professor Day growled humorously to his wife about Miriam's tactics. He was sure that she was keeping Carter Wright from making his desires plain—"though they're as plain as the nose on your face," he added, "in spite of her." What did the girl mean? Was she expecting the heir to a throne? Or did she have some silly-ass notion about a career?

Mrs. Day assured him that everything would come out as they desired—Miriam was, to her maternal reading, as much in love with Carter as Carter with her. Just give them time! And, meanwhile, Carter couldn't be more devoted to their entertainment if he were indeed their son-in-law!

There was a little family hotel across the street from the Sheraton, and it was there that the elder Days stayed. They seldom dined there, however, for Miriam and her friends were always making up parties for the evening, and they were always dining and supping and theater and opera-going. But on this particular evening every one was tired, and a studio dinner was the diversion arranged. A little dinner—just Carter and Sara and the Days. The artists had a shapeless French factotum who cooked deliciously whenever they wanted to eat at home, and Madame Pinchot was called in to prepare the feast.

It was over, and they were all sitting around before the big fireplace, relaxed, intimate, and happy. Affection emanated from them all, surrounded them like an aura. Miriam felt that resolution of hers never, never, to marry Carter slipping. He loved her, she loved him, they could be happy—what would be the harm? The past was dead and buried, buried fathoms deep!

"Mees Day, a gentleman." So said Madame Pinchot, waddling in from the kitchen regions.

"No, no, no!" cried Miriam. "You said I was not at home?"

"Yes, but 'e 'ear you laugh, Mees Day, an' 'e say——"

But what he had said to old Madame Pinchot was never told, for he had followed her down the hall, and now stepped into the studio, elbowing her aside—Presbery Steele, gaunt, hollow-eyed, strange. Carter looked inquiringly from the man to Miriam, who was standing, her eyes wide and frightened, her lips apart and trembling.

"Miriam!" said the man.

"Mr. Steele!" cried the girl, rallying her forces.

She hurried on with introductions, murmured words of explanation, referred to old acquaintance. Sara, watching through clouds of cigarette smoke, frowned until the line between her eyebrows was like a gash.

The newcomer paid but little attention to Miriam's words. He merely waited for them to cease. He did not lose his look of strain and excitement.

"How long," asked Miriam at last, "have you been back? Let me see—it must be nine years since I saw you——"

"You ask how long I have been back?" Presbery's voice seemed to boom in the still room. "I don't know. I don't care. Time has a new dating for me. I never lived, Miriam, until two weeks ago——"

"At the "Miriam," Carter Wright's face contracted, his hands knotted themselves together.

"I—I don't understand," said Miriam.

"Of course you don't. When you used to know me, I was a child of sin, sunk in iniquity, sunk in lusts and selfishness, sunk in degradation and dishonesty. I have been born again, I tell you, and my new father is not my old father of the flesh, but a parent of the spirit—Jerry Jasper. I live now

but to undo the wrongs I committed——"

"See here, old man, you're exaggerating, I'm sure," said Carter Wright.

He had risen and had walked over to the newcomer, who still stood. From behind Steele's shoulder, he indicated to Miriam that he would get rid of the man if she desired—would send for the police. But she shook her head slightly. Her face was white as paper. His heart contracted painfully, looking at her.

"Mr. Wright is right," struck in Professor Day, endeavoring to make conversation.

But Presbery Steele was beyond the power of conversation, of convention. The awful, consuming, blind egoism of the half-crazed convert was upon him. He had to talk, he had to boast, he had to lash himself into hysteria. When they learned what he was saying—that it was of wrongs to Miriam that he was talking, of intentions to right those wrongs, they stared at her, all but Sara Judd, with frightened eyes.

Miriam stood up, quite straight and very beautiful, when he had made himself horribly, hopelessly clear.

"Mr. Steele is obviously suffering from a delusion of some sort, Carter," she said. "Of course you realize that, father and mother. I read of an automobile accident in which he was hurt a while ago—I suppose that accounts for his condition. You'd better ring up some one to come and take care of him. Of course, he ought not to be allowed to go about alone, doing this sort of thing!"

"I'll attend to him," said Carter, and somehow, without much disturbance, he got the man out of the studio.

When he came back, an hour or so later, Miriam was alone.

"What have you done with him?" she asked abruptly.

"I have him under observation in Bostock's sanatorium," he answered.

"Bostock says it's a not uncommon sort of dementia. Of course, I know that of my own knowledge. We're always getting confessions, in criminal cases, from persons who haven't the least connection with the crime. Egoism gone mad—stepped across the line that divides the real world from the unreal. In this fellow's case, there may be a physical basis for it. His accident may have had some obscure result. And of course, the religious mania—— Oh, my dear, my dear!"

He suddenly broke off, ceasing to frame plausible excuses. He put out his arms to the white-faced woman and she walked into them, sobbing against his breast.

"That you should have had to endure such a wretched experience!"

"But it was true," she whispered. She shook in a chill that racked her slight figure.

"True?" She could feel his arms relax.

"True!" she cried, twisting out of his hold. "True! What he said. I—I—— Oh, don't you see? That was the reason I would not—could not—marry—you."

She looked fixedly at his face, striving to read its meanings. But she could not—a mist swam before her eyes, obscuring him.

"Please go away," she whispered again. "I—I want to be by myself."

But he did not move, only continued to look at her with that searching gaze.

"You wouldn't marry me because of him?" He spoke ponderingly.

"Because of—what had happened. I thought I couldn't bear to tell you—to change—your feeling for me. I could bear it better to let you go away, to lose you, than to have you—change. And now, in spite of me, you know, and—I suppose you pity me."

"Poor child!" he murmured, half to himself.

There seemed so little to say. She

waited, with beating heart, but the words of forgiveness for which she now longed as she had once dreaded the very thought of them did not come. And by and by, he was gone and she was alone again; gone without the patronizing pardon she had always feared—gone without forgiveness. She huddled before the fire.

By and by the telephone rang. She dragged herself to it. Perhaps he was going to say something to her. It was nearly midnight, but if he wanted to come back—

"Miriam?" It was a woman's voice, sweet, affectionate. It was Mrs. Wright's voice. Miriam could not hear what she was saying at first. And then: "Even if it is late, I had to call you up. My boy has just told me. I am glad, Miriam, glad!"

"Glad!"

"You will make him very happy. He will make you very happy, too, my dear. I shall come down in the morning to see you, and to tell your mother all about her new son."

"Is Carter there?" cried Miriam. Her voice was suddenly full and strong, her heart was beating high with excitement.

"Not now. He made me give him five minutes before I called you up."

It was half an hour before he called her up. He was at the Bar Association, he said.

"You've heard from my mother?"

"Yes. Oh, Carter, but——"

"There are no buts, my dearest girl. I couldn't waste time in silly, futile discussion of what change this thing was going to make between us. I couldn't waste time in inconclusions. You love me and I love you—there's no one here who is in the least interested in listening in on what I am saying—and nothing else matters much. Perhaps this—affair—has made a change; I never was so sorry for any one, Miriam, my dear, in all my life. That you will have to bear. It isn't too great a price to pay, is it, for all that we shall give each other?"

"Nothing is too great a price!" she cried.

And by and by she had hung up the receiver and, shining-eyed, had gone back to her fire and rekindled the blaze.

Yes, she had to pay a price. That was written and must be. But, as she sat there, dewy-eyed, before the leaping flames, she felt that she would be able to pay it. After all, what did it matter about surrendering one's inviolate pride if it was to love that it was surrendered?



DIVIDING WITH THE WEATHER

ALMOST every community that wants to attract tourists has its own peculiar way of boasting of the climate.

At Hot Springs, Arizona, a hotel has a sign:

"You don't have to pay board for any day the sun does not shine."



A New Department Conducted by D. E. Wheeler

A richer and fuller life, greater attractiveness and charm, are the gifts that culture brings to a woman. But what chance for self-culture has the home woman of limited means? Must she forego the benefits of travel, of hearing the best music, of seeing the best in art, of knowing the greatest books, and keeping in touch with what the great world is doing and thinking? We hope this new department will help to solve the problem for many such women.

The Three Gateways to Knowledge

LONGING for more knowledge is as natural as hunger and thirst, and it is no exaggeration to say that nine out of ten people, upon reaching maturity, regret some lost opportunity of education that they would like to have over again, only they do not know how to retrieve the missed chance, which, indeed, they are apt to believe is gone forever. They sigh to think that the portals of learning are closed, the past years standing guard implacably between them and their neglected goal, and so their late yearnings are stifled as foolish. Universities, to most of them, are out of the question because of lack of time, money, or both; besides, the changes are that they look upon themselves as too old to learn. College extension courses meet with the same objection. Free night schools are not available to the scattered and numerous population of small towns and rural regions. Correspondence institutions, it is true, are reaching into every nook and cranny of the country, but

still there are multitudes of inhabitants who cannot afford to pay even the modest fee asked for this instruction by mail. Hence, out of our hundred million population, the greater part of the adult members are without appreciable education.

Now, by education we do not mean a head crammed with miscellaneous ologies and isms, or the ability to chatter in several languages or to talk familiarly of Aristotle and Euclid. Rather, by education, we mean the mastery of one subject, whether it be astronomy, butterflies, or bricklaying, an intelligent grasp of many other departments of life, and the power of growth. Every one possessing an average amount of gray matter—and remember that the best of us use only a small percentage of our brains—together with the sincere desire to increase his or her interests and information, can achieve our idea of an education, and it will be our aim in these monthly talks to prove it.

Chiefly, it is through three main gate-

ways that we come to knowledge—through nature, people, and books. And there is no village too small and obscure to have all three of these avenues to the life of the mind. If we pause a moment to reflect, we will realize that most of the leaders of thought and deed, past and present, were born in villages of no significance, lived in them during the formative and impressionable years of their life, and found their way to fame and fortune through one or another of the three gateways we describe.

LESSONS FROM NATURE.

First and foremost of these three gateways is Nature, and her wealth and wisdom are inexhaustible. Furthermore, the poorest applicant is welcome to her stores of wonder. Nature never discriminates between humans. Seek her humbly, and she will reveal marvels and mysteries to you. She may make you one of her chosen confidants. But with even slight attention, you will soon discover that she is the source of all art and science. Handicrafts and trades were anticipated by Nature. Let us examine this truth.

When the Egyptians built the pyramids, they modeled on the mountains. In cathedrals and temples, men imitated the trees in column and arch. Flowers and leaves suggested endless ornamentation. Bees, ants, and wasps were architects, masons, carpenters, and engineers long before mankind conceived tools. Beavers were the original bridge builders. The tiny nautilus sailed the seas ages prior to the mariner. Through rolling stones and rolling logs, Nature showed the possibilities of the wheel. Soaring birds served as models for flying machines. Fabre, the late French naturalist, who lived with insects his life long, discovered, among other astonishing facts, that a certain wasp is the most wonderful surgeon in the world, inasmuch as the insect uses her

scalpel, or stinger, to the thousandth of an inch, producing paralysis for a certain period in her prey so accurately and skillfully that it is almost beyond belief.

The instances of Newton and Franklin observing and identifying two of Nature's supreme forces through a falling apple and a flying kite are too trite to mention, perhaps, yet they lead one to speculate on how many other simple phenomena there may be about us through which Nature is constantly revealing some fact still unknown that might rank beside gravitation and electricity. It is fair to suppose that not a tithe of Nature's lessons are yet learned, and she is probably telling us of a thousand new devices and fresh expedients. Keep your eyes and ears open, then, if you would capture any of her intimations. Get acquainted with weeds, flowers, trees, rocks, and animal life. The task is easy and pleasant, and a little patience and time will reward you a hundredfold.

THE VALUE OF PEOPLE.

But you may like people better than fields and woods and their citizens. People are the second great gateway to knowledge. Deep and sympathetic understanding of human nature is a mark of the divine in man. A friendly and noncensorious spirit will become the repository of many confidences. All of us seek a kindly confessor. Most folks are only too ready to pour into an open mind and heart their experience. And if you listen tolerantly, you will learn much that is of value. Even bores and cranks will profit you. If you cannot suffer fools gladly, then school yourself to suffer them resignedly. Your reward is sure, for a compassionate spirit is to be desired above a critical temper. Hear what everybody has to say, and draw your own conclusions. Cultivate the common, as well as the unusual, person. It is selfish,

narrow, and arrogant to restrict yourself to a certain type of associate. The lowliest may have more of value to impart than the most aristocratic. Just as in nature you should not despise a weed, inasmuch as you do not know what precious property it may hold, so you cannot afford to have contempt for the "common person." Sir Walter Scott was fond of saying that he could get as much food for thought from a driver of a stagecoach as he could from the dominie. Our own poet democrat, Walt Whitman, gloried in the humbler classes and preferred to fraternize with them. As in the soil itself, he found in them the most fertile element of humanity. Socrates and Lincoln are two of the leading examples of men who gained education and eminence principally through this gateway of people.

WHY WE READ.

Books are the third great gateway, and for many of us they are the easiest of the three courses open. At least, they are the easiest to advise about. It is almost impossible to show another how to commune with Nature or how to get on with mankind in general; these relationships and equations are so elusive and delicate, and depend so much upon the peculiarities of the brain and disposition of an individual. Recommended books, too, have a bewildering habit of appealing to one mind and repelling another. Yet, if one knows fairly well the inclination of a given mind, it ought not to be overdifficult to indicate reading-matter that would prove attractive and of worth. In these days of ceaseless presses and spreading enlightenment, books are both plentiful and cheap. What we get out of them depends not so much upon their number as their kind, and chiefly our knowledge will depend upon our method of reading. It is not what is *read*, but what is *remembered*, that counts. From only a handful of well-

chosen books, an eager and retentive mind may achieve intellectual bent. For instance, upon excellent hypothesis, we infer that Shakespeare read comparatively little. By his learned associates his education was held in slight esteem, and there are those of us who think it incredible that he could have produced such immortal work with so little schooling, but this unequaled genius drew from Nature and Man all that he needed.

TWO WONDERFUL BOOKS.

Reading a library of ten thousand volumes will not benefit the mind of a man if the scanned words pass through it as water goes through a sieve. Attention, concentration, and coöperation are demanded. Which books you shall choose we cannot attempt to specify without knowing something of your tastes, but there are two books that should be in every home worth the name, and both of them ought to be at least as useful as any chair, table, or dish among the household effects. One, as you may have guessed, is the Bible, and the other, as you may not have guessed, is an English dictionary. So far as we have been able to gather from observation and investigation, both of these paramount books are universally neglected. Now, you must admit that language is the storehouse of all the knowledge of the past; it preserves present experience and is our most precious gift to the future. Yet our mother tongue, so rich and free to everybody, is of small concern to the majority of people. Our ancestors made it a habit to read the Bible daily, and it thus became a tremendous influence in their lives, spiritually and physically, while their use of English was kept pure and powerful. In present times, it is rare to find the Bible read in the home, and the new generation practically ignores it. Aside from its powerful religious truth and spir-

itual transcendence, it is a compendium of life and literature. In language, it is unsurpassed and unapproachable. The neglect of the Bible in the modern home is one of the serious indictments against our vaunted civilization, and it may well be the reason for the latter-day poverty of speech as well as dearth of spirituality.

The dictionary is also lost in the up-to-date sweep and swell of daily events. People in general do not begin to appreciate the wealth in that volume. Occasionally, a definition or the spelling of a word may be looked up, but the tome is regarded as a dull one by most mortals, for use only in emergency. Greater information on a variety of topics was never gathered between covers than is found in the modern dictionary. To make it your companion and guide would be almost equal to a college training. This fact was brought powerfully to our mind by an acquaintance whose vocabulary and fund of unusual information led us to inquire as to his intellectual discipline. He said he owed everything to his "dictionary habit." For twenty years, he explained, he had made it a daily duty to spend a few minutes with his dictionary, opening it at random and choosing a word to make his own.

"It has served to make up for my disadvantage in having to leave school before I was fourteen," he elucidated, "and in twenty years of regular consultation, I have added, I suppose, several thousand words to my speech. Through it I have come to know hundreds of birds, animals, trees, flowers, inventions, scientific terms and apparatus, and innumerable devices and machinery. Quotations of poetry given to show the use of certain words I also memorized, and, being only a prosaic business man, I often startle a high-brow friend by my familiarity with Browning, Keats, Shelley, Tennyson, and the rest. So you can see what a

general educator the dictionary has been to me."

WATCH YOUR LANGUAGE.

We confess that the man opened our eyes to the value of the everyday dictionary, and we had a new respect for it. Doesn't the story stimulate you, too? While on the subject of words, we want to emphasize the point that correct and expressive use of language should be at the root of all education. The spoken word is an infallible index to your mind, and it is therefore the more amazing how easily one falls into the slipshod and meaningless phrase. Mispronunciation and misuse of words are heard even in cultivated circles. It is well to remember that your choice of words, the way you apply them, the very intonation of your voice, are being judged hourly. Through them, unconsciously, you are betraying yourself, your history, your environment, and your associates, as you talk about the weather, fashions, the cost of living, or any other ordinary theme of conversation. Bad grammar and a poor vocabulary are as great a handicap and disadvantage in society and business as a dirty face and torn clothes.

Hence, to reach the goal of knowledge through the gateway of books, language is of first importance, and the more you know of it, the better. Begin at once to enlarge your mental horizon by means of words, for they are the keys to all book-stored wisdom and polite society. And do not assert that "*It is too late.*" History and scores of men and woman refute you. Cato, you know, took up Greek at eighty. If that is too hackneyed a fact, consider Gladstone beginning on a new language when over seventy, and Mrs. Julia Ward Howe mastering the tongue of Plato in middle life. Coming still closer to our day, we read in the newspapers only recently of an old lady entering a Western university to study

history and economics after she had received a degree from another seat of learning.

Another outworn excuse is "*I have no time.*" Sheer nonsense! One makes time for anything that is loved. A man we know attained a working knowledge of three languages during his commuting hours on the daily trains. Another aspirant of our acquaintance rose two hours earlier in the morning so that he might study architecture outside of business. And a friend, an employee of the United States post office, with hours that would seem to preclude any other activity, studied medicine, and is now a successful doctor. Again, a woman we met sacri-

ficed her lunch hour to music lessons, and became an accomplished pianist. Any one can cite similar cases.

If aught in this disquisition arouses you to action toward any one of the three great gateways to knowledge, we are rewarded for our pains. It is our wish to spur on those who doubt their capability, who are timid, and who really want to increase their brain capacity. Write us if there is any subject you would like to see treated in this new department. In a true "clubable" spirit, we stand ready to discuss anything suggested, to be, above all else, helpful and stimulating, and the majority of requests from readers will guide our course.

Any inquiries prompted by this article will be gladly answered if addressed to the editor of this department.

DREAMERS

HE basked beside old Genoa's bay,
Where tides were lapping, blue and sleek.
The little western breeze at play
Tangled his curls against his cheek.
The sea its milkiest haze has donned.
What lies beyond? What lies beyond?
Another world? A flower-white strand?
The snow top of some jagged peak?

"Rise up, thou idle lad, rise up
And aid thy father at his toil!
Bear him his panikin and sup.
Wouldst dream all day while others toil?"
The docile lad, Columbus, bent
His lithe brown limbs and, stumbling, went
To unloved tasks. But still would glimpse
Through some chance door the bay's blue cup.

A dreamer? Yet, the scorn of men,
Long years he planned, he strove, he bore,
To gain his paltry fleet, and then,
Past beating seas—the flower-hung shore!
That bright adventure, aye, and more—
The wireless word, the wingéd screw—
Were stuff of dreams that brave hearts bore
And brave hands wrought till dreams came true.

JEANNIE PENDLETON HALL.

More About *the* Violin

By Ethel Shackelford

Author of "The Life of Me," "The Truth About the Violin," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY ROBERT A. GRAEF

So many of our readers have asked for more about Elsa Strimberg, who appeared in Miss Shackelford's remarkable story in the November number of SMITH'S, that we are happy to present this sequel to "The Truth About the Violin."

IF there was one thing in life that interested Ludington Jones more than studying old stringed instruments, it was avoiding girls. That he had studied much was proved by the fact that he held a responsible position in the violin department of the biggest music house in the United States. That girls bored him was proved by the fact that girls found him fascinating.

But to-day, as the whistles and big clocks about Chicago were sounding twelve, Ludington Jones stood on the steps of a great national bank and watched a slender brown-eyed girl in a rather shabby gray suit make her way through the noontime rush of that big and wicked city. To his knowledge, she had ten thousand dollars in currency in her worn, faded hand bag, for she had just put through the very strangest business transaction he had ever heard of. Furthermore, this girl had revolutionized most of Mr. Jones' calculations. She had made him wonder if his eyesight were failing, if it were true that he was supposed to be a violin expert, and if, after all, girls were as shallow as he had decided they were.

He wanted to follow this girl, as a detective might, and learn more of her. But Ludington Jones was a gentleman. A gentleman, under the existing circumstances, could not follow her.

Piqued and beaten, he drove his hands into his coat pockets and headed

himself for luncheon. He held the bill of fare unseeingly. The waitress asked his order. He apparently did not hear her. She asked again.

"Stradi—— Strawberry shortcake—egg sandwich first—— I don't care!" he astonished her.

It was hot. He merely toyed with his food, then paid his bill and left. Halfway back to work, the music store suddenly loomed up to him like a prison. There were fifteen stenographers all making a noise at once behind his desk. He had never noticed them before, but to-day he was sure he could not stand them. Somebody bumped into him and sent him up near a florist's window, where there were some jars of cool-looking sweet peas and rosebuds.

"Hanged if they don't look like her!" he complained to himself.

No, he would not go back to work, come what might. What was the use—if, at twenty-seven years of age, he had got no further than to turn down the violin this shabby girl had offered his firm as a genuine Stradivarius, only to have her return with the same box and sell the violin to the manager himself? And ten thousand dollars she had got for it. He held her receipt now, signed "E. Strimberg."

The girl had hurried things abnormally, too, saying that she must catch a train within an hour. Young Jones' attempt to find out where her

train was to take her had resulted in her sweetly telling him that it was to take her "home." There had been a polite finality, too, in her "Good-by" on the bank steps.

the car. But he didn't go to the park—he got off as usual at the corner nearest his lodging house.

He whipped out his key and bolted up two long, dark, dreary flights of stairs to his room. It seemed deadlier than ever in the still heat of the early afternoon. He threw himself in his big chair and gazed at his small, but interesting library—biographies, mostly, and works on early stringed instruments. "What's the use?" he appealed to them. He had been hurt—professionally hurt—and this kind of a hurt



He had got no further than to turn down the violin this shabby girl had offered his firm as a genuine Stradivarius.

Ludington Jones had quietly remarked: "It is only good morning from me." But how was he ever, ever, ever to find her? Then he scored himself for not having followed her.

He was about to try again to go back to work when a Lincoln Park car was stopped near him by the policeman's whistle. Being in the clutches of that slyest of all little devils—the one they call - "What's-the-use?"—he boarded

is the worst in the world. He had thought he knew a genuine old violin from a fake, but now he realized that he didn't know much of anything—not even enough to go back to work and protect his position.

Ludington Jones was a sensitive and a very lonely young man. Once he had been a boy and cheery, but his fifteenth birthday had ended that. This was the day his mother had been buried, the day the landlord had taken the furnishings of the flat for back rent, the day the boy had realized that there was only one refuge for him—the "Help Wanted" column. On that dreadful day, which young Jones so vividly recalled as he sat staring at his books, a violin maker had advertised for a boy who was a "hustler."

Well did Ludington Jones remember being accepted by old Georges Floubert, an inveterate, egotistical talker, who had begun at once to insist that his young helper should understand and admire each bit of his work. The boy had often wearied of listening to the old man rattle on about how little musicians really know of the instruments they play, and always had he emphasized the point that this country needed experts such as he intended to make of his young assistant.

"Oh, I'm an expert right now!" the boy had retorted one day. "I can make a fiddle."

The old man had chuckled and had given the youngster some materials which he had bidden him model into a copy of a Stradivarius, when he wasn't busy selling a G string, dusting off the show cases, or running errands. The boy had manfully gone to work with a fifteen-dollar Stradivarius copy as a guide, and he had actually made a fiddle, a funny, crude thing that nowadays hung on his lodging-house wall.

"Once I thought you were beautiful and I took you seriously!" sadly smiled Ludington Jones, as he gazed at the clumsy thing, now a nice color with the twelve years of its age.

But he was miserable here in his introspective mood, so he dashed out again, a second time headed for the park. But at the corner, the south-

bound car reached him first and he boarded it, back to the heat and hurry of the city. He would go back to work, even though late, he reasoned. But at his corner, he did not move. He neither knew why nor cared. Several corners beyond, he noted the tall block that marked the street wherein old Floubert now had a basement repair shop. The boy jumped off, almost getting caught in the car doors. It had been a long, long time since he had seen the old man, and this seemed just the day to drop in and tell him how much his friendship really meant to his former pupil. Besides, the story of the strange girl and the Stradivarius would interest him.

The young man found old Floubert standing very much as Elsa Strimberg had left him, for, in truth, she had been gone but a few brief moments. The old Frenchman stood, wide-eyed and white, one old hand on a large roll of bills of goodly denominations, the other on his violin case.

"Well, well, how are you, good old Poppa Floubert?" called young Jones from the doorway. "It's been a long time since I was here, hasn't it?"

But there was no answer. The old man stared at him dully.

"Why, why, why!" remonstrated the boy. "What is the matter, Poppa Floubert? You look as if I were a ghost, instead of your old trusty helper. Not ill, are you?"

The old man slowly raised the handful of bills and gave them to his caller. Now it was Ludington Jones who stared as if at something supernatural. The boy glanced at the violin case, recognizing it as the home of the famous Stradivarius used by three generations at the Grand Opera at Paris.

"Gone!" breathed the old man. "Gone, my beauty Stradivari! Eet vas my life, Luddy Shones!"

"You sold the Strad, Poppa Floubert?" gasped the boy, drawing closer.

"How much?" He began counting the bills. "Who bought it?"

"Von young lady cousin twice remove" to a boob—five t'ousand dollar. Eet happen much too queek, much too queek!"

"Tell me about it—right away!"

"Zis fiddle vas my life, Luddy Shones. I haf played eet not in many years, but eet vas my all. I haf no familee, I haf no friend but—you, and you come here not een ze year twice! I haf made of you one expert on ze violin, but you t'ank me by staying wiz ze music house, and I hate ze music house!"

I wish you to make for yourself von shop, and zis money eez for you. You know very much of ze violin, Luddy Shones, very much!"

"Oh, do I just?" groaned the boy.

The old man tottered. Ludington Jones sprang over the counter and shoved a chair under him.

"Why, Poppa Floubert!" he affectionately reproved him. "You must cut out the sad stuff. What's the matter with you, anyway? Let's count this money. That will brace you up."

But the old man swept the bills all into one pile and swiftly crammed them into young Jones' coat pocket, saying:

"Eet matters not for me—I am old. But you shall haf a shop!"

"We'll have a shop together, Poppa Floubert, as we did in the old days!" The boy encouraged him. "I'll go and bank this cash; it isn't three yet. But who got the Strad—a girl? Brown eyes, a smile like Mona Lisa, and a shabby gray suit?"

"Oui—exact! Gif a liddle vater for a seek old man!"

Eet vas a shock to lose my beauty Stradivari. I haf pain een ze heart some time."

Ludington

Jones hurriedly drew a glass of warmish water from the workshop faucet and gave it to his old comrade. Thinking the while to take his mind off his distress, he engaged his interest in the matter of the



The old man swept the bills into one pile and swiftly crammed them into young Jones' coat pocket.

girl. Ludington was indeed the best chap on earth, but he was not tactful—he quite forgot Flouber's vehement hatred for the big music house.

"That girl," he enlightened the old man, "walked into the company's this morning with a fake and got turned down. An hour or so later, she was back with a genuine Strad that was a twin at a glance. I bet that second fiddle was yours, and she sold it to the company for a cool ten thousand dollars."

The old man dropped his glass and rose in magnificent fury. His face was blood red, his eyes wild.

"I would die before I would see zat Stradivari go to ze music house!" he stormed convulsively. "I hate ze music house! Bah! I hate—I hate——"

A sudden contortion seized Georges Flouber and he went deadly white. He whirled as one shot, and fell face down—dead.

"God!" breathed Ludington Jones, kneeling beside his old friend and running his hand over the still heart. "Why didn't I think? Why didn't I think?"

Rising at last, the boy drove his hands into his pockets, a trick with him when dealing with something serious. He touched the bills, five thousand dollars' worth of them—his money, now, and more money than he ever supposed he should have at one time.

"I'll find that girl if it costs me every cent of it!" he announced to the emptiness and stillness about him.

He picked up the telephone and called the coroner, then he called the Pinkertons. He ordered their best man at once.

The Pinkerton arrived ahead of the coroner. Young Jones described Miss Strimberg fairly well—for a man—and ordered every station watched, as the young lady had said that she was taking a train in an hour.

"Did she kill the old man?" asked the detective.

"No, but I want to know where her home is."

"When did she tell you she was leaving in an hour?"

"Just at noon."

The Pinkerton smiled a patronizing, professional smile.

"Well, it's two-fifteen now. We've got a nice, fat chance of finding that girl in Chicago!"

"Well, find out if anybody has seen her. Somebody might remember in a general way what direction she took."

"If she didn't kill the old man, and you don't want to marry her, I'd call off this game if I was you," was the man's advice. "But I can nose around and telephone you here every hour, if you like."

"Go ahead," ordered Ludington Jones.

At a quarter past three came the first report. Young Jones had just returned from helping carry out the body of his old friend. He was depressed enough, but still the Pinkerton had no encouragement. Three stations and several hotels had been "covered." Nobody had seen such a person.

The next report was at a quarter past four, and was of the same tenor. Young Jones hung up the receiver with a heavy heart, and turned to the violin case, which in the confusion he had not thought to examine before. Ah! Just as he supposed! Here lay the very fake that he had rejected that morning—he recognized it by a scar on its face—and while he had not examined the Stradivari so quickly bought of this girl later, he knew it must be old Flouber's. And he had always supposed girls were the acme of nothingness! This girl must surely be the long-sought exception.

"Find her?" he reflected. "Find her and get the truth out of her? Yes, if I have to work years at it!"

The telephone bell rang again. It was a quarter past five. The Pinkerton said that for his part he couldn't see that there was "anything to it." For all he could find out, the girl not only was not in Chicago, but never had been! The taxi bill was up where any millionaire would be satisfied, and as for him, he was quitting work at five-thirty.

As one fatigued did Ludington Jones close up old Floubert's shop for the night and leave the building. Dinner seemed impossible to him, a movie show a coarse refuge, his lodging house frankly intolerable. He roamed the streets, dully watching the hurrying crowds make for their motors and trains and cars. Like a cork in a troubled sea, he was buffeted about the Loop, up and down Michigan Avenue, and all around the Rush Street piers. About nine o'clock, hunger seized him, and the food of the blue-light restaurant somehow suggested that he check up the Pinkerton's work. He had as much trouble finding out if anybody had seen the Pinkerton as the Pinkerton seemed to have had finding out if anybody had seen Miss Strimberg, but the game interested him.

At a quarter to twelve he was sufficiently tired to think of home. Being now near the Grand Central Station, he thought he'd run in and get a paper. He could have got one from a boy at his elbow, but something pulled him back into the building. Something pulled him from the news stand out to the sheds, though surely he must have known how useless it was to ask the officials any further questions. At eleven minutes to twelve the big door shut him out where one takes the trains. His eye naturally traveled to the man who kept the gate. He staggered as he saw that man punch a ticket and hand it back to Miss Strimberg, who grabbed it and rushed out, with her straw suit case and shabby

hand bag, to a train just beginning to move. The porter lurched for her bag and threw on his step, as the Pullman conductor fairly lifted the slight girl onto the train.

Ludington Jones rushed forward, calling to the gate keeper:

"You saw that last passenger, the girl in gray?"

"Sure I saw her."

"Where was that train going that they dragged her onto?"

The man in uniform adjusted his glasses, looked down the yard at the departing train, put a rubber band on a bunch of tickets, and leisurely inquired:

"Say, ain't that *her*?"

"Yes—the girl I was asking you about an hour ago. Where does that train go?"

"The one she's on? Oh—'most everywhere up that way—Michigan City, St. Joe, Benton Harbor, Grand Rapids, White Cloud—some place; ever been there?—Traverse City, Charlevoix, Petoskey, Bay View, and Harbor Springs. Why?"

"Do you know the number of that train?"

"Me? Sure."

"Well, if you'll wire the conductor and find out at what place that girl gets off the train, I'll give you ten dollars and expenses. Here's my card and telephone number."

He handed the card to the gateman, who looked at it cynically.

"All right," he finally agreed. "But I'll take the price of the telegram right now, please."

Ludington Jones had a lot to think about on his way home. Life was really very, very interesting—he hadn't realized it before. Funny what just a glimpse of the right person will do toward lifting the clouds of sorrow and loneliness and odds and ends like that off one's mind! And the Pinkerton business had its ups and downs as well

as the violin business, too! Professional failures were not confined to his profession and to himself. This was a happy thought! And it was with a tired blond head full of veiled amusement, cool sweet peas, Mona Lisa smiles, and lots of good, real money, that Ludington Jones drove his pass-key into the weather-beaten door of his lodging house at half past twelve.

His landlady called him from dreamland at half past seven, to answer an urgent call at the telephone. It was the gateman, who bellowed:

"Come on downtown and be here with that there ten of yours when I go on at six this evening, and I'll tell you where she got off."

Grand Rapids, as it turned out, was where the young lady had gathered up her shabby bag and her straw suit case and alighted. The rest promised to be simple. It isn't hard to find anybody where he lives; it's only hard to catch him as he passes by in strange places. Ludington Jones was as happy as he thought it decent to be while waiting in Chicago to help lay at rest the mortal part of the old man who had, in his way, been a true friend.

Mr. Jones arrived in Grand Rapids,



And the girl was the one he sought, sweet in a fresh pink dress of gingham, but tired and heavy-eyed.

as Miss Strimberg had, in the early morning, three days after her homecoming. He went to a hotel and got the telephone directory before he registered. There was only one Strimberg—Doctor Henry Strimberg. He promised himself to call at that house as soon as it was possible for a young man to call. If it happened to be the wrong Strimberg, he would invent a symptom and consult the doctor!

It seemed a very long time until ten o'clock, the young man thought, but at that hour he found himself ringing the bell at Doctor Strimberg's house. A trained nurse astonished him by opening the door. Taken aback, he shyly stammered:

"She—she isn't ill, is she?"

"She?" echoed the nurse. "It isn't Mrs. Strimberg, but the doctor, who is ill. And he is very desperately ill. Will you come in?"

There was a big mirror on the wall opposite the wide entrance to the living room. Ludington Jones' first glance discovered this glass, and the glass revealed the picture of a tall, dark young man with his hat under one arm and a physician's bag under the other, just about to leave the young lady upon whom he was evidently calling. He picked up her hand and tried to kiss it. She withdrew it and, with an expression of unutterable aversion, stepped away from him. This, young Jones saw in a flash. And the girl was the one he sought, sweet in a fresh pink dress of gingham, but tired and heavy-eyed.

The nurse, whose back was turned to the mirror, stepped to the living-room door, saying:

"Miss Strimberg, will you kindly see what this young man wants?"

Then she went briskly upstairs, as the tall young man left, glaring at the incoming blond young man as he passed out and closed the front door behind him.

Elsa Strimberg recognized the violin expert with a gasp of "Oh? How do you do? Won't you come in?" Her manner was constrained as she indicated a chair and took one herself. "I—a—I thought we said good-by on the steps of the bank in Chicago?" she faltered.

"Oh, no, no," pleasantly and nervously decided Mr. Jones. "That is, I didn't say good-by—I only said good

morning, meaning, of course, that I hoped to see you again."

"What for?"

"To tell you the truth about the violin."

"I know all there is to know about that violin."

"No, oh, no. Beg pardon, Miss Strimberg, but there are some things I think you don't know. And besides, with your permission, I should like to ask a question that has baffled the Pinkertons. We understood you were leaving for home in an hour, but you really left at midnight of that day. Would it be asking too much to want to know where you kept yourself between the hour you left Mr. Floubert's shop and the hour you took the train?"

"Why—no, I suppose not, though I don't see why the matter should interest you. I went from the old Frenchman's place right back to your music store, where I sat until six o'clock in the hall where they play the music machines."

"How this will interest a certain man I know! And after six—if I am not too pressing?"

"I had supper in a cafeteria in the neighborhood and spent the evening at a movie show. I stood near you when you were looking at the billposters. I was just back of one of the easels. You seemed to be debating with yourself as to whether you would or would not go in."

Mr. Jones almost sprang up at this, but he gulped:

"How this interests me!"

"Why?"

"We were hunting for you."

"Who?"

"A Pinkerton and I."

"Why?"

"To—to ask if you thought Grand Rapids a good place to open a new music shop in."

"Why?"

"Because I have a fake Stradivari

that I want to dispose of and I need a little expert help. This is where you live."

The girl turned resentful and cold at this, although it was humorously and politely said.

"I hardly suppose you can be in earnest," she replied, "but if you were, I should not be in a position to consider any business offers. I—I expect to be married shortly. I—I am, for that matter, just engaged recently. It may be just as well to know the truth about me."

"Engaged to the young man who just left?"

"Doctor Sykes, yes—a great favorite of my father's. So, you see, it really was good-by on the bank steps."

"No, not at all," he manfully insisted. "I couldn't think of going into business without your help, especially in the matter of old violins."

"A married woman has no time to be of any help."

"Oh—she has time to help the man she marries."

This confused the girl, but in a moment she demanded:

"What is your name?"

"Ludington Jones. What is yours?"

She seemed shy and perplexed and very tired. At last she said simply:

"Elsa."

"Elsa—how lovely!"

"How dare you speak to me that way when I've told you I am engaged—and you are only a stranger?"

"Do you see that mirror?" he asked, pointing out into the hall. "I couldn't help seeing you say good-by to your fiancé. I respect your father's wishes in the matter of this engagement, but he overlooked respecting mine." He was very audacious, yet very sweet and intense in manner.

The girl was frantic. She did not know how to handle the situation at all. She looked desperate and finally demanded:

"What have you come here for, Mr. Jones?"

"I came to thank you for five thousand dollars; I came to offer you back the violin that your family have considered a genuine Stradivari for three generations; I came to give you a Strad that I made when I was fifteen; I came to make you say good morning to me, instead of good-by."

"Good-by!"

They both rose.

"Good morning." He walked straight to her and took her hand. She did not resist him. "Say it!" he quietly and lovingly commanded. "I'll go now, but I shall come again to-morrow and the day after and the day after that and all the days that I live after that. So—good morning."

She tried to take away her hand. He held it tighter and got the other hand, too.

"Say it!" he commanded.

"Good morning," she whispered sweetly.

"The Trail-Taker"

By Bonnie R. Ginger

A complete novelette in the March number of SMITH'S. The very human story of a splendid girl who comes to New York to earn her living. A romance of love and business.



"The Titrivor"

By Holman F. Day

In which Cap'n Sproul gets into a real scrape upcountry, part of the story being founded on fact. In the next number of SMITH'S—on the news stands February 5th.

Marrying Alethea

By Bessie R. Hoover

Author of "Pa Flickinger's Folks," "Opal," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD V. BROWN

Alethea had plenty of suitors, but she finally chose—which one do you think?

LETHEA'S twenty years old this month, and it don't seem no time at all since we adopted her, a tiny baby, after her own mother died at the mission," related Mrs. Butch Panner, a tired-looking middle-aged woman, "and now she'll soon be married—the way things look!"

It was evening, and she was sitting with her husband, who owned the corner meat market, on the side porch of their comfortable home on Loretta Avenue in the suburbs.

"Aw, say, no!" shouted Butch, a large, ruddy man, who had made his way in life by honest industry. He had worked first for his wife, Jonesy, whom he had wrested by main force from her scrupulously neat and very particular mother, Mrs. Emma Jones; and he had also worked for his two boys, William Jones Panner, commonly called "Billy," and Clarence Augustus Panner, junior, named for himself, but nicknamed "Buddie," though the most wonderful incentive of all had been his delicately pretty adopted daughter, Alethea.

And the idea that Alethea was now old enough to marry struck Butch with dismay.

"I ain't prepared to have her leave us—and never will be!" he cried unhappily.

"And I don't know what I'll do without Alethea, either," sighed Mrs. Panner.

"You can't do without her, for you ain't so strong as you used to be,

Jonesy, on account of your everlastin' cookin' and bakin' and scrubbin'—when bakery stuff 'u'd help you out, and I 'u'd be glad to hire a woman to work. But you're growin' jest like your mother, so turrible neat that you can't trust nobody but yourself and Alethea."

"But no woman that I ever hired done things right," plaintively reminded his wife, who dearly loved to do her own housework.

"Since Alethea's come home from school, she's took a-holt fine, but if she 'u'd leave us, I don't know what you would do. Oh, I certainly ain't disappointed in Alethea. She's some daughter, ffever too dressed up to help you or to run errands for me; but I don't intend she shall spoil it all by marryin' some stick and goin' away to live. So let's say no more about her gettin' married—never!"

"Keepin' still on the subject, Butch, won't stop her. Besides, I want Alethea to choose for herself. I'll never forgit the trouble ma made me. And we might better talk over her marryin' now than to have it come as a disagreeable surprise."

"Tain't so serious as all that," emphatically denied Butch.

"Yes, it is, too," gently contradicted Mrs. Panner. "There's more than one feller sweet on Alethea right now."

"Name one!" demanded Butch, as if asking her to mention some great criminal.

"Georgie Tweedie."

"Aw, him! He's been hangin' round

here for years. I supposed George was more of a joke than anything else."

"But he's a nice, hard-working lad. Everybody respects George."

"I 'u'd like George better if I didn't respect him quite so much. He's so nice in such a disagreeable way."

"And there's our Buddie—he likes Alethea."

"Why shouldn't he? They was fetched up together."

"But Buddie's old enough to marry."

"But that lad's never had the slightest intention of marryin' anybody. He's always been too busy in the meat market to go round much with the girls. Never took one to a party scurcely, except Alethea, and then she jest about had to make him do it. Bud's all for earnin' money," approved his father. "And he's puttin' a lot of vim into the meat business jest as I'm growin' older, so I've got to relyin' on Bud. He's one of these quiet, dependable fellers that is comfortable to have round."

"And it might be some other young man that we don't know of now. She goes out in company so much," continued his wife.

"But there wouldn't be any problem about Alethea's marryin' if children ever did what parents expected 'em to. Billy, now, he 'u'd have gone into the meat market alongside of Bud, and then Billy 'u'd have married her, and we could all have gone on livin' right here together. That idee come to me when she was still in the cradle. But no, Billy must go gallivantin' off to half a dozen colleges—when one would have took care of all the brains he has. And then Billy goes and gets a position as professor of psychology—a subject I never heard of afore he said he was goin' to teach it—and he never oncet comes home. Almost two straight years have passed since he left. Forgot his folks entirely."

"But he writes every month. And last year he stayed away to teach in

the summer school, and he earned considerable money."

"Still, Billy ain't pleased me one bit. I wanted our sign to read, 'Panner & Sons.' Does he say anything about comin' home this summer? It's about time his college shut itself up—if it ever does shut up."

"He ain't mentioned it lately, but I think he intends to come."

"That's Billy all over! Makes all his plans without reference to his folks. He's a queer Panner, always lank and white-complected, no life in him. I 'u'd ruther have a stubbed son like Buddie, if you ast me."

A subdued murmur of voices suddenly arrested their attention. Then they heard their son Bud's voice rising with angry insistence, as he came around the house to the side porch, followed by Alethea.

"What's all this racket?" questioned Butch crossly.

"It's Bud—interfering," informed the girl, and dropped on the steps, her white skirts spreading about her. She had a delicate, pretty face and dark curly hair, and was entirely unlike any of the Panners.

"Mebbe Bud had a right to interfere," hinted her adopted father.

"I should say I did have a right!" cut in Bud, as he sat gloomily beside Alethea on the steps. "It was George. Nobody wants him here!"

"Is that so?" anxiously inquired Butch.

"He will come," answered the girl indirectly.

"Hush!" cautioned Mrs. Panner. "There's somebody walkin' round the house."

It was George Tweedie, himself, a stocky, cupidlike young man, whose plump, rosy cheeks, full red lips, and strong jaw, were not discernible in the dim light, but the very shape of whose smart hat and square shoulders was



"This evening, walking up from the library, George asked me to marry him again, and I said 'no,' as usual."

unpleasantly intrusive to the Panner family.

No one said a word after formal greetings had been exchanged; but this silence did not daunt the young man.

"I forgot to hand Miss Alethea her book. Here it is," he began politely.

"Oh, thank you, George," Alethea cried, with overanxious cordiality.

"She oughter keep closer tab on her library books," apologized Butch.

"Have a seat on the porch, George," invited Mrs. Panner, with tardy hospitality.

"No, thank you. I can't stay but a moment. We were having a little discussion, Miss Alethea, Buddie, and I, and Buddie doesn't quite understand my attitude. So I felt I must speak plainly to you, Mrs. Panner, and to your husband, here, concerning my attentions to Miss Alethea. And when I noticed that I had forgotten to hand her the book that I carried up from the library, I thought I 'u'd come back to-night and explain myself."

"Right enough," grunted Butch.

"I want you to know of my respect and—er—affection for Miss Alethea. And being strictly honorable, I wish to say at the present time that Miss Alethea doesn't care for me—except as a friend."

"Then that's all there is to it." Butch sighed with relief.

"Pardon me, no. I myself feel that you will give me the same chance that others have to win your daughter—but Buddie hinted that you might not. Now, Mr. Panner, I know that you've always stood for fair play. And all I ask is a chance, with others, to win Alethea for my wife!"

An uncomfortable silence fell upon the house of Panner, which Butch finally broke by saying:

"I dunno as Bud has any right to talk to you like that."

"And don't you think, Mrs. Panner, that in the end Alethea herself should be the one to decide whom she marries? I ask you, for a woman's intuition——" George paused impressively.

"Why, y-e-s, I was a-sayin' something like that to her father to-night."

"Thank you," George spoke fervently. "I wish to be perfectly honorable, and I'm glad to have had this little talk with you."

"Though I don't see what good it will do anybody," put in Bud grimly.

"Don't forget your manners, Bud," testily corrected his father, and then added, "I don't want Alethea to marry anybody—and leave home; but for all that, I do want fair play."

"I knew, when you understood my position, you 'u'd be right with me," heartily allowed George.

Then he shook hands with Mrs. Panner, gripped Butch's reluctant hand manfully, bowed smilingly to Alethea, nodded cordially to Bud, and turned to go.

"What's your hurry?" asked Butch Panner grudgingly; for since George Tweedie had put his affection for Alethea on so high a plane, Butch felt that the insistent young man would win her.

"I'm reading 'The Fall of Rome,' so my time's pretty much all taken up. Good evening, all."

"I dunno as George means any harm," sighed Alethea's father, when that young man was out of hearing.

"And he's certainly a polite lad," praised her mother.

"For years that fellow has run over this family," put in Bud Panner with solemn anger. "And he means to marry her whether she wants him to or not!"

"George is merely a friend," spoke up the girl heatedly. "And you make a mountain out of nothing, Mr. Bud."

"Aw, do I? Dad, listen to this—George and Alethea are engaged right now."

"How about it?" demanded her father in an awful voice.

"George is engaged to me—but I'm not engaged to George," informed Alethea in a distressed voice.

"Aw, what a mix-up!" groaned Butch.

"This evening, walking up from the library, George asked me to marry him again, and I said 'no,' as usual. Then he told me that he considered himself

engaged to me—'cause he'd always liked me better than any other girl; and Bud overheard him. But George said that I needn't consider myself engaged to him—until he had won me—if I didn't want to. I know it sounds silly." Alethea seemed undecided whether to laugh or cry.

"Then why does he come in here and spiel about fair play?" inquired Butch angrily.

"Because I overtook 'em and broke into the conversation and told him to stay away from here," informed Bud.

"Tain't very honorable, Bud, if you ast me, shadowin' George and Alethea from the library," criticized his father.

"I wasn't shadowin' 'em—didn't know they were on the street at first. But they walked slower and slower, and I couldn't help but hear George explaining how he believed in first love—imagine his talking like that!—so I cut in and shut him up—or tried to!"

"Why not freeze George out, Alethea, if you don't want him round," proposed her mother.

"I've tried that—it doesn't do any good."

"And George influences her all the time," claimed Bud Panner savagely. "She's always going to places with him—after she's said she won't. And then think of his coming in here and getting round you, dad, with his fair-play talk!"

"I don't see why Alethea lets George hang round with her so much if she don't like him," said Butch thoughtfully.

"You forget the boxes of candy, hot-house flowers, and dinky gift books he's always giving her," bitterly enumerated Bud.

"I guess our little girl don't care much for such trash," allowed Butch.

"Maybe not in one way, but she can show it to other girls," enlightened Bud.

"That's a new one to me," grumbled his father. "But listen, folks. Ain't

that George a-prancin' round the house ag'in?"

"Sounds for all the world like our Billy's step," sighed Mrs. Panner.

"And it is your Billy's step!" shouted a hearty voice. And as Bud turned on the porch light, his brother, William Jones Panner, professor of psychology, stood revealed, suit case in hand, before them.

Butch stared in astonishment, while Jonesy Panner searched her son's face for a moment before she knew who it really was.

"Why, mother, have I changed so much?" cried Billy, as he kissed her. "Well, father, here I am at last!"

And at this genuine greeting, Butch Panner felt all his resentment against his long-absent son dying away; for never before had the erudite Billy addressed him as "father."

"And here is Alethea—prettier than ever," continued Billy. "Well, I don't object to that," he generously added. "And how's this kid, Bud?"

Bud, delighted to see his brother again, replied with manly gruffness.

"Couldn't you eat something, Billy?" inquired Mrs. Panner fondly.

"A slice of your bread and butter," returned Billy.

"Now, Butch, suppose I had nothin' but bakery stuff in the house?" asked the young man's mother, when they all entered the dining room. Then she quickly spread a lunch and inquired anxiously, "How's the bread, Billy?"

"Better than ever. And I remember that it was Alethea's little beau, George Tweedie, that got around you several years ago, mother, by saying, 'A mother's bread is never commercialized.' What ever happened to George?"

"Nothing's happened to him—but we all wish there had," declared Butch Panner violently. "Forgit George for one night."

"I'm perfectly willing to forget him forever," good-naturedly allowed Billy.

"As I recall him, he was a persistent little chap, given to walking over a person in a perfectly polite way."

"He ain't changed," sighed Butch, and then, dismissing George from his mind as one does an unpleasant dream, he looked curiously at his son, who had left home a lank, pale, negligent young man, whose sartorial make-up had always been freaky, gorgeous, and expensive, and had come back ruddy, filled out, and well, but quietly dressed. His sober necktie and his genuine happiness at being again with the family marked him as a changed man.

"We've—that is your ma's been looking for a letter from you," ventured Butch.

"I tried to write last week, but some way I couldn't seem to say just what I wanted to in a letter," confessed Billy. "I'm going to get married."

The astonished Panners looked at one another and then at Billy.

"President Jenks of our college has advised me to marry, and I promised him I would—if the young lady consented," and he smiled at Alethea, while his mother stared at him with a white face. Billy had always been her favorite, and his offhand announcement had been a shock to her.

"It's this way," obligingly began Billy: "President Jenks thinks I'd have more weight with the pupils if I were married—and perhaps I should."

"Object to telling us the young lady's name?" cried Bud facetiously.

"I've decided to marry Alethea," informed Billy, as he calmly continued to eat his mother's excellent bread.

The affectionate smile on Bud's frank face deepened to a look of blank dismay.

"Don't joke, Billy, about your sister," reproved his mother.

"No joke," seriously assured her son. "I suppose I've heard my father say a hundred times that he wanted me to go into the meat market with him and then



"I've decided to marry Alethea," informed Billy, as he calmly continued to eat his mother's excellent bread.

marry Alethea. Obviously I wasn't intended for the meat market by nature—for I don't even eat meat any more—and I couldn't be satisfied with Loretta Avenue after the education he's given me. So when President Jenks suggested that I marry, which is really a command if I'm going to teach in his college any length of time, I thought at once of Alethea."

"Wa'n't there another girl—a while back—that you was sweet on?" asked Butch feebly.

"Sure—Wilhelmina—a juvenile romance. Silly mistake, that's all. But I won't make any mistake in marrying Alethea. I know her disposition too well."

Alethea's smile was very near tears as she looked strangely at Bud Panner.

"You might just as well know, Billy, that George Tweedie was here to-night and just the same as proposed, askin' Butch for a chance to win Alethea," said his mother. "And then our Bud, here, he——"

"Aw, thunder! Don't drag me in!" interrupted Bud and went hurriedly upstairs.

Billy was astonished at his brother's behavior, and said with more emphasis than he had used before that evening:

"I supposed that in marrying my adopted sister I should be pleasing the whole family. And as far as George Tweedie is concerned, he's nothing but a joke. The college environment will be a fine thing for Alethea, and surely, mother, you know I'd be good to her."

"It ain't that——" Mrs. Panner was beginning, when Butch interrupted:

"She 'u'd be so fur away from us. I can't make what you say seem real."

"Perhaps, Alethea, you'd rather marry George." Billy's tone was politely incredulous.

"I don't want to marry anybody, right now," returned the girl unhappily, "but George has asked me so many times to marry him that he'll feel terrible if I don't. And Bud seems to think that I go round trying to attract

folks, and now he'll blame me because you've asked me."

"Don't worry about either of 'em," soothed her foster brother.

"But George makes his courtin' ruther interestin'," warned Butch.

"What do you say, Alethea?" questioned Billy.

"I don't know *what* to say," and she looked appealingly at her mother.

"We'll just let it run along—no hurry now—and then get married in the fall before I go back. And you go ahead and have a good time with the young folks just as you've planned for the summer. I've got to do some heavy reading while I'm here, so I wanted to get this over the first thing and settle down to it."

"But it's five hundred miles away, your college is," gloomily stated Butch.

"I'll bring Alethea home now and then, dad, so don't pull so long a face."

"But I want Alethea to choose for herself," said Mrs. Panner firmly. "She shan't marry any man just to accommodate him, not even you, Billy."

"Choosin' her jest as you would a suit of clothes—I dunno as Alethea's got much of a chance of happiness that way," complained Butch.

Billy was annoyed.

"If you hadn't been so keen on the start, dad, for me to marry Alethea, I'd probably never have thought of her when President Jenks advised me to marry. But I told him I'd do it, and I want to keep my word. Besides, I haven't got time to look up any one else."

"Well, I dunno——" Butch Panner paused, unable to put into words his dislike of the situation.

"And, say, if you had to board where I did, you'd want a home of your own."

"It 'u'd be nice for you to have a real home, Billy," acknowledged his mother.

"And you've been writing to me what a fine housekeeper Alethea is getting

to be. That helped to decide me. And I've got my eye on a furnished cottage that I could rent cheap. But I mustn't sit here talking, pleasant as it is to be home again. I must go to bed, for tomorrow morning I've got to begin my reading, and I want a clear head."

"But, Billy, you don't scurcely seem to see Alethea at all—how pretty she is," grumbled Butch Panner, "but your eyes light up somethin' wonderful when you talk of your summer readin'. You ain't normal. You're gettin' to be a bloomin' bookworm—that's what you are!"

As week after week passed, Billy read serenely for his degree, and Alethea continued to have a good time with the young folks of her crowd; while Butch Panner and his wife worried more and more about the loss of their adopted daughter. And sometimes Butch-even said, when he and his wife talked over the situation, that he would almost rather she married George, for then, at least, she could live in the same town. Yet, one evening when he discovered that Alethea was wearing a diamond ring that George Tweedie had bought, Butch wished that he had never heard of that high-minded young man.

"It isn't a real engagement ring," laughed Alethea, when her father questioned her. "George says I may regard it for the present as a souvenir."

"Souvenir is a good name, all right," concurred Bud Panner, his face glowing for a moment with some secret, pleasing thought.

"I don't like this here tangled-up affair!" cried the bewildered butcher. "Billy, do you approve of Alethea's wearin' George's ring?"

"He probably forced it on her," good-naturedly inferred Professor Panner. "It doesn't mean anything."

"I refused the ring, even as a souvenir," explained the girl, "and then George left the box on the table. And after he'd gone, I got to looking at it—



"Married?" thundered Butch. "So George made you marry him after all!"

"Somebody oughter tell George what Billy's intendin'—this fall," worried Butch.

"Oh, I've told him," admitted Alethea; "and George says he only wants fair play."

"But I doubt if he gets it," put in Bud, as he looked thoughtfully at his foster sister.

When Professor William Jones Panner had but one more week at home, he complacently informed his parents that he had finished his summer reading and was now ready to rest.

They were sitting on the side porch in the moonlight, but the beauty of the evening only added to Butch's uneasiness.

"If you don't git busy about Alethea, she'll probably marry George," he abruptly told his son. "Remember that diamond ring. She'll hate to give it up."

then I tried it on—— It's just a joke," she excused herself.

"Take it off—to oncet!" testily ordered Butch.

"Unless you are really engaged to George," modified Mrs. Panner.

"I'll buy you a prettier one—a little later, Alethea," promised Billy.

"Better hurry up, Bill, or she'll get attached to this one," advised his brother Bud.

Slowly Alethea slipped the shining trinket from her pink finger and reluctantly put it in the velvet-lined box that lay on the table.

"No great hurry." Billy spoke languidly.

"But not knowin' whether we're goin' to lose our girl or not is gettin' on my nerves so I can't sleep nights. And it's a-gettin' on your ma's nerves, too."

"Where is Alethea? I suppose I might just as well talk it over with her this evening," allowed Billy.

"She's jest comin' home now from the library," said Mrs. Panner. "And here's Buddie with her," she added, as that young man and her adopted daughter came around the house together, the girl's white dress fluttering against Bud's dark suit in the pleasant moonlight.

"Where've you been, Alethea?" demanded Butch, as a matter of form.

"I've been to get married!" announced Alethea, and threw her arms about her mother's neck and kissed her.

"Married!" thundered Butch, rising jerkily from his porch rocker and towering above the slight girl as she stood by her mother's chair. "No, don't kiss me!" Never before in all the sheltered years of her short life had he spoken so sternly to his adopted daughter. "So George made you marry him after all!"

"But, papa, I'm not married to George——"

"Then I suppose you married Billy, here—and kept it secret. No wonder Bill was so sure of you! And now you'll go more than five hundred miles away, and Billy'll forget to bring you home!"

"But listen, papa. Let me tell you how it is. I'm not married to Billy, either——"

"Bud, what're you grinnin' at?" broke in Butch, distressed. "You've took a poor time to make fun of me—or Ale-

thea—or Alethea's husband—whoever he may be!"

"Stop a minute, dad, and let me say a word. I'm married, too!" put in Bud with a radiant face.

"Double weddin'," groaned Butch.

"But, Butchie, let 'em tell you," happily cried his wife, who had already guessed the truth.

"Billy, what do you make of this?" asked Butch, turning to his eldest born.

William Jones Panner, professor of psychology, looked sharply at his brother and then at his adopted sister, and a knowing, benevolent smile crept slowly to his face.

"They're married to each other, dad! Got ahead of George and me, too!" And though Billy had honestly tried to satisfy President Jenks, he felt singularly light-hearted at losing Alethea.

"No! What? Well, mebbe they are!" finally admitted Butch, and as it dawned more fully upon him, he cried delightedly: "Say, Jonesy, we're goin' to keep Alethea after all. Unless Bud is thinkin' of buildin' a house of his own," he added apprehensively.

"Not with the price of lumber sky-high. We've planned to live with you and mother, if you want us," informed Bud.

"But what ever possessed you to marry Bud?" Butch Panner asked his adopted daughter.

"Oh, I just liked Buddie best, and mother always said I should choose for myself."

"This'll be great news for George!" exclaimed Butch. "But, Bud, why didn't you leave me know what you was up to?"

"I didn't think it necessary to talk to you about it, the way George and Billy did. I talked to Alethea herself," modestly explained Bud.



The Lady of Rocca Pirenza

By Anne O'Hagan

Author of "By Cool Siloam," "The Awakening of Romola," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY EDMUND FREDERICK

The second installment of a three-part serial—an absorbing story of character and passion and thrilling incident.

WHAT HAS ALREADY HAPPENED.

While engaged in social settlement work at the James Winant House in New York, Cordelia Stimson, a young American heiress, meets Count Flavian Pirenza, lord of an impoverished estate in Italy, and almost at once the two fall in love. In spite of Cordelia's wealth, there is no question of fortune hunting in the affair, for by the terms of her father's will, Cordelia is to lose all her money in case she marries a foreigner. But the young people are so madly in love that poverty has no terrors for them, and Cordelia has saved up enough out of her income to provide them with a modest capital. Shortly before the wedding, however, Flavian hears that his brother Benedict has embezzled some money, and that the Pirenza name will be dishonored if it is not paid at once. He takes it for granted that Cordelia will consent to his using her savings to settle the matter, and so, indeed, she does, but her New England-bred soul is shocked by his indifference toward his brother's crime save in its effect upon the Pirenza "honor." It is her first intimation of a fundamental difference in their points of view. About this time, an aunt of Cordelia's dies suddenly, and it is found that she has left both Cordelia and her fiancé enough money to give them a comfortable income. The marriage takes place soon after, and the young couple leave on a honeymoon trip that is to end at Rocca Pirenza, Flavian's ancestral home.

CHAPTER IX.

TO walk in happiness as one walks in sunlight, surrounded by it, permeated by it, is an experience perhaps vouchsafed to few, certainly never vouchsafed to any uninterruptedly. The mystics, indeed, conscious of some invisible companionship, translating into terms of beatitude what to the mundane mind is pain or grief or disillusionment, may so experience it; but only by a deliberate perversion of definitions, only by electing to name "white" what the general consensus of opinion calls "black." To all the rest of us, happiness is an intermittent emotion.

When Cordelia and her husband reached Florence, on their way toward his home in the south of Italy, she, at least, had known two untarnished months of pure joy. She felt happiness palpably around her as she moved. It

seemed to her a thing tangible, physical, like dusk upon tired eyelids, like cool, caressing waters to the limbs of a swimmer. She had walked in it, she had bathed in it, she had breathed it, she had exhaled it from her person—the wonderful, fine, flaming happiness of a sensitive, generous nature, utterly satisfied with the new experiences into which it has been led by love.

Even apart from the inner rapture of her relation with Flavian, apart from the sense of blissful, secure companionship, the outward circumstances of her life were happy. For the first time she was traveling abroad, and she found that this was in itself an intoxicating pleasure, even as she had dreamed that it would be. Sometimes her mind glanced backward toward her mother, and her mother's books about foreign lands. She overflowed in quick, evanescent sympathy for that gentle

soul whose harmless dreams had been unrealized. And that was her nearest approach to grief during the blissful weeks in England and in France. Flavian, it seemed to her, had been the most wonderful of guides in those days of early discovery. He had delighted in her enthusiasm; he had instructed her ignorance; he had favorite nooks and corners wherever they journeyed, to reveal to her.

To her it was, of course, no novelty to be unembarrassed by the thought of money, by the necessity for devising ways and means to obtain it. But the anticipated poverty of the weeks of her engagement had been a source of some slight anxiety to her, despite her lack of acquaintance with poverty's limitations. So that, greatly as her own income was reduced by her marriage and her acceptance of the terms of Solon Stimson's will, she had, in her aunt's legacy, a fresh source of satisfaction during her honeymoon.

It was pleasant to her, too, to realize how thoroughly, how childlike, that windfall had delighted Flavian. It had made him happy beyond what she had ever supposed mere money could make any one. He had invested his share of the fairy gift, as he continued to call it, in the business that he had projected, but now he was relieved from the necessity of supplementing the profits of that business by a salary. He translated into lire the twelve thousand five hundred dollars a year that would be the smallest possible income from his investment, the incorporators assured him, and felt himself a millionaire. He planned quite impossible improvements at Rocca Pirenza; he even dreamed of rescuing the palazzo in Naples from the profanation of the business which was housed in it; and meantime he bought his bride charming little gifts, which she rejoiced to take almost as much as he rejoiced to bestow them. At the hotels and inns where they

stayed, he ordered for her the most discriminating of repasts, and opened her eyes, which had been inclined to look upon food merely as fuel for the human engine, to the æsthetic and artistic possibilities of dining.

All the vagaries of his temperament, now revealed to her intimately, seemed to her the flowering of a fine charm. She liked his quickness, his extravagances of fancy, his endless ability to "play." She liked the cultivation of his mind—not a mere matter of to-day and yesterday, but of long generations. She was lifted out of herself and borne along on a current of pure, unguessed joyousness. More and more she pitied the women to whom marriage could open up no such wonders, no such revelations, of personality. She was glad with all her satisfied heart that she had married a stranger, an alien.

The holiday mood was still upon her when they arrived at Florence. There they were to visit his sister, Mrs. Harding, wife of an English gentleman of dilettante tastes and occupations, who professed to find the climate of Florence more congenial to his constitution than that of England during the greater part of the year. They had come straight through from Paris, and Cordelia's wide, eager eyes had practically their first glimpse of her husband's country—her country, as he constantly reminded her—when they came out of the car shed at Florence. She had the unjaded traveler's quick observation for all variations from life as she knew it. She found picturesqueness in the swarming, blue-bloused porters, bending cheerfully under heavy loads, smiling, eager; the glimpses she caught of little lunch carts, gay with straw bottles of red or white wine, circulating along the platforms and offering their wares to travelers, seemed to her charming.

But Flavian did not let her dally. He had indicated to one of the blue-bloused *facchini*s the luggage that he wished

carried, and now he was hurrying Cordelia along.

"Pouf! Florence!" he said, with laughing contempt. "Don't use up your rhapsodies here, Cordelia. This is an English city. Ah, there are Antoinette and the excellent Lionel. I was sure they would be waiting for us."

He indicated, the other side of the iron gates, a graceful, compact, dark-eyed woman accompanied by a long, loose-limbed gentleman, unmistakably English by the Dundreary whiskers that he wore in bland disregard of changing styles, by his tweeds, and even more by a certain look of detachment from the vivid press of life about him. Almost as soon as Cordelia had glimpsed them, she beheld her husband embracing his sister. They kissed each other upon both cheeks, upon the lips; they poured forth a perfect torrent of Italian ejaculation. In spite of the conscientious daily lesson of all these weeks, Cordelia could not understand a word of it, but the pantomime was so eloquent that she did not need words to interpret it. Mr. Hardinge stood by and met her eyes with a pleasant twinkle in his own. He gave her a sudden sense of homely comfort, which she had not felt before that she needed.

But now Toinette had released her brother and was stretching out both hands to Cordelia. Cordelia yielded her own and was drawn into a warm embrace.

"You are everything that he has said about you. I see that at once," said Mrs. Hardinge, with much satisfaction, her dark eyes, her red lips, seeming to emphasize the compliment.

Meantime, the porter, bowed down beneath the weight of their valises, but showing all his teeth in a smile of sympathy over this family reunion, waited for directions. At a signal from Mr. Hardinge, they started for the line of cabs outside the station. Cordelia breathed a sigh of actual relief when

the luggage was deposited and the porter had received his honorarium and departed.

"I shall never in the world get used to seeing men carry such loads upon their shoulders," she stated with conviction.

The others laughed at her.

"They're used to it, you know," Toinette told her seriously. "Their muscles are specially developed for it. Besides, you wouldn't have the poor fellows starve, would you? How else could they earn a living?"

"Oh, my wife is a terrific radical," said Flavian banteringly. "She is going to reform us out of all our wicked, comfortable ways in no time. Just watch her!"

Cordelia blushed a little under the smiling regard of three pairs of amused, friendly, indifferently tolerant eyes. And then she exclaimed at the sight of flower venders grouped about some church steps, and then at a flying glimpse of a palace, and then at the sight of a bridge across the yellow Arno. Toinette raised an inquiring eyebrow toward Flavian.

"Cordelia's first trip, is it?"

Flavian nodded. His sister sighed in facile appreciation of the situation.

"Fancy!" she said. "How enchanting to be the first to show one's country to one's beloved!"

"That didn't happen to poor Toinette, countess," explained Mr. Hardinge, with his drawl, which somehow gave an effect of humor to all his remarks, "because I had had the hardihood to do Italy from the Alps to Sicily before I ever saw her. I've been showing her native land to her since."

The cab drove into the courtyard of a yellow, mellow palace. There was a fountain playing in the center of it; there were roses dropping their languid petals upon the grassplot surrounding the fountain; there were palms and oleanders, not set in tubs,

but growing straight and tall from the kindly earth.

"It is too lovely!" sighed Cordelia rapturously. "And you live here!"

"We have only the second floor," Antoinette hastened to correct the impression of great splendor. "What you call in America"—she smiled with naïve pride at her cosmopolitan knowledge—"a flat. But do not fear! It is a large one. It was the home of the eldest son of the family when the family was a great one, not reduced to letting out its palaces. Twenty-six rooms we have. Not so small, eh?"

From a little officelike room beside the entrance, a sleepy-looking concierge dragged himself. He bobbed his head four times, once to each of the four, and in response to Antoinette's brisk commands, he uttered a slow "*Sì, sì, signora.*" Then they all wedged themselves into a little electric lift beside the broad marble stairway and were wafted up to Antoinette's dwelling, while the concierge toiled up the stairway with the luggage on his back.

"We ought to walk and let him use the lift," protested Cordelia, but they only laughed at her.

"Oh, by the way, Flavian, I forgot to tell you," Antoinette paused at the doorway to ejaculate. "I'm awfully sorry, but she is going to-morrow. Vittoria is here. She has been spending a fortnight with me. I didn't have your letters in time—"

She spoke in Italian, but this time Cordelia understood. She looked inquiringly at Flavian. Who could Vittoria be, that his sister should apologize for her presence? Some uncongenial relative, probably. Evidently no one of any great importance, for Flavian's frown had melted almost before it was formed.

"Ah! So? Why should she not be here? You and she were always friends."

Antoinette's relief was quite palpable.

"I knew you'd feel that way about it," she declared vivaciously. "Now, come on in. This poor child must be starving." She gave Cordelia's waist an affectionate pressure.

"They're quite civilized here in Florence," remarked Flavian, after a brief inspection of the little suite assigned to them. Cordelia had sent away Antoinette's maid. Maids had not been part of her sober Wheelville education, and they slightly embarrassed her. "You must not expect to find all this display of porcelain and nickel when you reach Rocca Pirenza. That's in the wilds, you understand. Toinette has quite gone in for the English style, hasn't she—chintz and all that? It's pretty, of course, but it doesn't look exactly natural in these rooms, does it?"

But Cordelia had turned her back upon the rooms with their lofty, decorated ceilings, their wonderful red-tiled floors, their carved cornices and window frames, among which, truly, the flowered chintzes did look a little trivial, and had stepped out upon a narrow stone balcony opening from one French window—a balcony running over with pink roses and geraniums. From it she could see the Arno at the foot of the street, a yellow stream spanned by an old bridge, and across on the other bank another city—so it seemed—with mellow houses of cream and pink and buff climbing upward toward the hills. She was giving little ejaculations of delight, little sighs of satisfaction, when, upon a balcony directly opposite hers, across the courtyard, a woman appeared. She stayed but for a second, but that second imprinted upon Cordelia's retina the picture of a graceful figure white clad in a flowing peignoir, with unbound black hair hanging almost to her knees.

"Flavian, who is Vittoria, the Vittoria you do not seem to like? Has she wonderful black hair? For if she has, I've seen her. Or does Toinette's flat"—she laughed, recalling certain



Mr. Hardinge stood by and met her eyes with a pleasant twinkle in his own.

"flats" near the Cape of Good Hope—"go clear around the court and embrace the opposite wing?"

"Yes, I think it does," answered Flavian. "She has moved while I've been away. I haven't been here before. It's unexplored territory to me, too. Ah, here come the bags," as a knock sounded upon the door. "It will be good to get into some fresh things. This night traveling is all very well for you Americans, who flourish on it, but it doesn't agree with our slothful ways."

Cordelia laughed and forgot about Vittoria and the lady of the black hair. She was exploring her big valise and

asking Flavian how soon the trunks would arrive. Her sister-in-law had struck her as a very modish person indeed; she found herself stirred into almost a competitive feeling. But the best that the valise afforded for morning wear was a girlish-looking frock of white. Cordelia sighed, but she put it on.

"I look so much more like the tennis courts at Wheelville than the Rue de la Paix and Italian palaces," she complained, staring disparagingly into the pier glass between her bedroom windows. "And I did so want to impress Toinette and your disagreeable cousin

or aunt, or whoever she is, with my utter elegance."

"My disagreeable cousin?" Flavian repeated the words, perplexed.

"Yes." Cordelia, by this time, was almost prepared to believe that she had had her information about Vittoria from some other source than her own imagination. "Vittoria."

Flavian, who was making a peripatetic toilet between the dressing room and his wife's bedroom, paused abruptly, his hands suddenly paralyzed in the neighborhood of his collar. After a second, he resumed his tying and his walking.

"Vittoria is not my cousin," he announced. "She's not related to us. She is the Signora Cambi, an—an old friend of Toinette's—and of mine." There was a pause before the last phrase.

Cordelia, rummaging among her minor knickknacks for some adornment in harmony with the white crêpe blouse and skirt, had not watched his face.

"Oh, I thought she must be a relative. One usually hates only one's relatives." She selected some corals and tried them about her throat. "No, I can't wear corals; they make my hair perfectly hideous—carrot. Well, why do you dislike her so much, since she isn't a relative? Do you think these green beads will look all right? Of course, they're nothing but glass——"

"They are lovely, and we'll get you a string of green turquoises this very day—square-cut ones, I think, with little dull-silver balls between. Don't you think you'd like those? There's a little shop on the Goldsmith's Bridge where all the funny little jewelers are. You'll enjoy shopping in Florence, Cordelia. I've heard women say it was the most fascinating city in the world to shop in."

He had come close to her and had clasped the string of green beads at the back of her neck. He kissed it when he had performed this office, and then

he drew her head back to his shoulder and rested his cheek against hers.

"Do you love me?" he whispered. "Forever and forever?"

"Forever and forever," replied Cordelia, who had learned to bear her part in this sort of dialogue under the joyful teaching of the past two months. "Forever and forever—to the end of time, and backward to the beginning of time."

He raised his head suddenly from beside hers and took his hands from about her neck.

"We must hurry," he said. "Antoinette will have it in for me if I don't deliver you over to her at once. And think of all the nephews and nieces you are to meet! There are four of them at home, I believe. The two oldest boys are at school in England."

"Yes, but say it!" insisted Cordelia, swinging about and putting coercive hands upon his shoulders. "Say it!"

"Very well, then." He spoke swiftly, like a child reciting a lesson. "Forever and forever, to the end of time, and back to the beginning of time."

"You mustn't make me remind you again of your responses," said Cordelia, doing something to his necktie with willful fingers. "And you mustn't make them as if you were singsonging the multiplication table. Four at home! For Heaven's sake, how many children has Toinette?"

"Six—to date. You know Italian women like children. They like large families."

"Six!" Cordelia pondered it. "That sounds like a great many to an only child. But you haven't told me yet why you dislike this old friend of yours and hers, this Vittoria."

"What on earth put it into your head that I disliked her?" demanded Flavian irritably. "I don't dislike Signora Cambi. Only one may, quite naturally it seems to me, want to be alone with one's own people when one comes home

from three years' journeying and brings one's wife!"

"Oh, I suppose I misunderstood what Toinette said. Somehow, I had the impression that the Signora Cambi's visit would be particularly annoying to you. I suppose I misunderstood——"

"For the love of Mike," cried Flavian, dropping into the expletive that had particularly charmed him in New York and that he had made his own, "why do you keep talking about Vittoria Cambi? You've talked about nothing else since we arrived."

"Why, Flavian! I barely mentioned her."

"It seems to me that you've asked questions about her every second," he insisted.

"Well, if I have, it was because you didn't answer them. But I haven't asked questions about her."

They stood in the middle of the room looking at each other with expressions they had not hitherto worn. In an instant had arisen—what?—to cloud the clear visage of their love. Cordelia's eyes were perplexed, hurt, a little angry; Flavian's were hurt and angry, too, but there was no question in them.

"I think," said Cordelia suddenly, surprising herself as greatly as she surprised her husband by the words she uttered, "that I must ask you to make it more clear to me about this lady. Who is she, that you should quarrel with me about her?"

"I quarrel?" Flavian unsuccessfully essayed a laugh. "I'm not quarreling. If I spoke irritably, I beg your pardon. I'm hungry. I did not mean to be cross."

"Who is she?" persisted Cordelia, suddenly and quite inexplicably filled with the conviction that the earth must cease to revolve upon its axis until she had an answer to her question.

"I have told you. If I should retail her whole family history, you would

be no wiser. For Heaven's sake, Cordelia, what has got into you?"

"Whatever it is," said Cordelia slowly, as one who ponders an important utterance, "you yourself have put it there. I don't understand——"

"Children! Oh, my children!" Antoinette's voice and the play of Antoinette's knuckles against the door panel interrupted the quarrel. "Aren't you ready? I can't keep my unruly offspring within bounds any longer. Please appear!"

She had begun the sentence in the hall outside, but she ended it in the room, for Flavian flung wide the door with a gesture of unmistakable relief. Behind Toinette crowded the four children, the oldest a fair-haired, English-looking girl of fifteen, the youngest a black-eyed cherub of four. As Cordelia, smiling mechanically, went forward to greet them, she was poignantly aware of only one fact in all the changed world—it was the first time in all these happy, golden weeks that Flavian had welcomed an interruption to one of their tête-à-têtes!

CHAPTER X.

"It was most unfortunate. I shall never forgive myself, never! But I did not have Flavian's dispatch until the day before you arrived, and his letters—— Well, you haven't been separated from Flavian yet, so you don't know what a desultory, casual, perfectly unsatisfactory sort of a correspondent he is. Still, I shall never forgive myself. To have spoiled your first day at home so—it was unforgivable! Yet you were bound to meet her some time——"

"Please don't be so distressed about that part of it, Antoinette," said Cordelia heavily. "I don't think you quite understand me. It isn't that she was here, in your house; it wasn't that I had to meet her—though, of course, that

would be distasteful to any one—abominable! But it's— Oh, how shall I say it? It's that she, and not I, had his first love—I can't talk about it! I don't want to talk about it. But I do wish you wouldn't distress yourself about the feature of it that doesn't, after all, matter in the least."

"My dear, you must be practical, you must be sensible!" Antoinette spoke pleadingly, commandingly. "You knew that Flavian was twenty-eight. Surely you didn't suppose—" She broke off with an expressive shrug. "Instead of being miserable about it, why not be glad that he's through with all that sort of thing, with all irregularities? I know my brother. He adores you. He will be a most faithful and devoted husband. After all, you know, a woman has no claim upon a man's life before the day when she meets him."

"A man has a claim upon a woman's life before the day when he meets her," interrupted Cordelia.

Antoinette laughed a little sadly.

"Ah, but that is different. We are different from men—why not accept that? After all, Flavian has been infinitely better than most. His—his attachment—to Vittoria was perfectly dignified. I have always felt, myself, that she had a great deal to do with forming him—his tastes, his manner, and all that. Yes, I really think he owes her a great deal."

"Why didn't he pay the debt by marrying her, then?" demanded Cordelia icily.

Antoinette stared at her in surprise.

"Oh, she was not a widow at that time. Her husband died only last year. He was a beast—a perfect beast! There was every excuse for Vittoria. He had practically deserted her for years."

"She could have divorced him, I suppose?"

"Great heavens, no! Vittoria is a very devout woman! Why do you laugh like that? I mean it. She really is.

She would never have thought of a divorce. Besides, she's years older than Flavian, you know—and—it would have been altogether unsuitable. He was only twenty-three when their friendship began, and she was thirty. An admirable age, you know, for a—a—friend, but far too old for a wife. Besides, as I said, that was out of the question."

She paused and looked with some curiosity at her young sister-in-law, who was staring out across the rose-hung balcony to the pink-and-buff city climbing the hill on the other side of the river. Cordelia seemed disinclined for further conversation. The vivacious Mrs. Hardinge sighed.

"There is one thing I wish you would tell me," she said. "How on earth did you leap at the truth so swiftly?"

"I don't know," replied Cordelia dully, turning toward the room again. "Only, I knew it the minute I saw them speak to each other. I think I guessed it before that. I don't know why—I don't know how. I'm sorry that I've"—she smiled a little wearily—"that I've messed things up a bit for you to-day. I should never have bothered you about it."

"Oh, Flavian has very few secrets from me," replied Mrs. Hardinge, with some complacency. "He was really in a dreadful state of mind after you had extracted the truth from him, after *déjeuner*. I hope you won't keep him on his knees too long. Truly, Cordelia, he doesn't deserve the penitent's stool as most men do. If it were Benedict you had married, now! Well, there's one thing certain—I should never plead Benedict's cause for him. Benedict is a plain beast—no, a complicated one! But Flavian—you'll have to forgive Flavian."

"Yes, of course I'll have to forgive Flavian," repeated Cordelia. "Perhaps you're right—perhaps I have nothing much to forgive. Only you see—you

see"—her lips quivered, her eyes filled with tears for the first time in all that dreadful day—"I thought that I was bringing him, as he was bringing me, into a new world, into a sort of—promised land. That's all. I deceived myself."

The new sister put her arms about Cordelia and kissed her with sudden, sympathetic tenderness.

"I know, I know," she whispered. "We'd all like it to be that way, we women. But I think it must be only you American girls who grow up thinking that it is so. Or perhaps—perhaps it may be so in that wonderful country of yours. Perhaps they have really made over human nature there." And then, when Cordelia answered nothing, she added: "I'm going to send Flavian in to you now. You won't be hard upon him?"

Cordelia pushed her away, but not ungently.

"You don't understand," she said. "I don't want to be hard upon him. There's nothing to forgive, nothing at all to do. It's only that I don't live in the world I thought I lived in this morning. There is no such world—there never was such a world."

"I'm going to send him in to you now," said Antoinette again, softly, sadly, after a little pause.

Cordelia made no answer. Of course she had to see Flavian. Of course there was nothing at all to do. Perhaps it was true that it was not he who was responsible for the collapse of that beautiful universe, all ivory and blue, all rose and gold, in which she had been living for the past three months. Perhaps, as Antoinette had suggested, it was her education that had deceived her, not her husband, not her lover.

She heard the shutting of the door as her sister-in-law went out. By and by she heard it open. She raised her heavy eyes. Flavian stood, his hand still upon the knob, almost as if he

were prepared to flee again. But when he met her look, he gave a little exclamation of pity and of grief, and in a second he was on his knees before her, his arms about her waist.

She never knew just what they said to each other in the next half hour. The anger, the strong sense of personal outrage, that had possessed her in their earlier talk, when she had flung at him the accusation that Vittoria Cambi had been his mistress, had utterly departed. And he, too, had lost the spirit in which he had met her charge. He no longer tried to justify himself; he no longer summoned an anger to meet her own; no longer accused her of deliberate folly, of careful, chosen blindness to life as it was. Instead, he was now all pity for her hurt, all shame and contrition that his had been the hand to wound her, even though the wound had been inflicted before he had ever seen her. He should have known, he should have foreseen, he said. And brokenly, over and over again, he kept assuring her that what he felt for her was a new and joyous thing, not akin to what had gone before; that he had had a new birth in his love for her, and that nothing of the old soul, the old heart, remained in him.

By and by, when, stirred to the depths by his passionate self-abasement, when, pitifully convinced that it was he who had lost the most through that inability to wait for the perfect love, she bent her head to kiss him, the taste of his tears was salt upon her lips. And then she wept, too, and in some mysterious way love seemed to rise again from their tears, purified from even the memory of wrong.

It had not seemed possible in the middle of that tempestuous day that its close could be so peaceful, so serenely joyous. Antoinette had expedited Signora Cambi's departure between luncheon and dinner by some means into which no one inquired, and only the

family gathered at the latter meal. Hester, the long-legged girl with flowerlike blue eyes, named for an English aunt, was permitted to sit through the whole of the repast, and the two children next in order came in for dessert. It was very charming, very merry. Cordelia felt that a good deal of the charm and merriment was due to her brother-in-law, tranquil, wise, easy-going. She wondered through what storms he had passed with the tumultuous Antoinette before they had arrived in this safe harbor of the emotions. Some day, when she knew him well—she was quite sure that she was going to know him well—she would ask him how long it had taken him to adjust himself, or to adjust Antoinette.

"By the way, Flavian," said Mr. Hardinge, turning to the young count, "Eustis Nesbit is in town."

"How could he cease to do good long enough to come here?" asked Flavian laughingly.

"It's all part of his doing good," explained his brother-in-law. "He's here to interest some ladies of the English and American colonies in the products of his schools. He's trying to get up an exhibition, I believe. He'll tell you all about it, himself, to-morrow. I've asked him to come in for luncheon."

"You'll be interested in Nesbit, Cordelia," her husband informed her. "Indeed, I shall have to see to it that you aren't disposed to waste a lot of time on him and his projects. He's trying to civilize my barbarians, you know."

"What do you mean?" asked Cordelia, looking from one to another of them, all so smiling and easy in the mellow candlelight.

"Oh, Nesbit is the Miss Louise Pendleton of Rocca Pirenza. He's the James Winant House. He's the whole corps of the settlement."

"What on earth are you talking about, Flavian?" asked Antoinette. Then she turned to her sister-in-law.

"Eustis Nesbit is a sort of connection of Lionel's," she explained. "He's a dear, impossible sort of person. He was going to be a clergyman, but there was one of the Thirty-nine Articles, or some trifle of that sort, which he couldn't accept, and instead of saying nothing, like a sensible man, and going on with his career—every one must compromise with principle, or perish—he felt obliged to develop conscientious scruples and to give the whole thing up. He came over here to pay Lionel and me a little visit, and we took him, in a misguided moment, to Rocca Pirenza. I can't tell you how shocked he was at the conditions he found there." Antoinette laughed, as if it were the most delightful joke in the world.

"He's such a dear! The kind of Englishman who is forever seeing to it that his tenants' cottages are properly drained and have nice new roofs! Well, as he hadn't any cottages of his own, he adopted Flavian's. Somehow or other, he managed to start a school—how on earth he got the money, I can't imagine—and he tries to teach the little savages the use of the toothbrush and common fractions, and some useful handicrafts. They do weave quite a good sort of linen there now, the girls. I use it for the children's frocks—it wears like iron."

Antoinette turned her maternal attention toward the youngest of the children at the table and apparently forgot Nesbit and his undertakings for the moment.

"But I think this is wonderfully interesting!" Cordelia spoke with animation. "You never told me anything about it, Flavian."

"I don't know much to tell you," replied Flavian indifferently. "I've been there very little since Nesbit settled among us. I dare say he doesn't do any great harm."

"Harm!" ejaculated Cordelia.

"What did I tell you?" said Flavian,

turning to the Hardinges with a smile. "Don't you hear the ring of the true reformer in my wife's voice? Don't you see the zeal for change in her eyes? Oh, we're to be made over, indeed! I see it." He raised his wineglass and smiled across the table at Cordelia. "Here's to all the improvements, dear Lady of Rocca Pirenza! You and Nesbit shall have your own way with us. We need it, from the chieftain down."

"Of course, you know, you can't really do anything with them, the peasants," declared Antoinette oracularly. "But equally of course, it's no harm to try. It will give you an occupation until"—her eyes dwelt fondly upon her children—"you have something really important to do."

CHAPTER XI.

Something of the sight-seer's detached curiosity and delight had gone out of Cordelia that first day in Florence. She did not define her attitude to herself. She only felt that she could no longer enjoy as she had been enjoying, as she had expected to enjoy. She did not tell herself that the spirit of happiness was in abeyance in her. After she had met Eustis Nesbit and had heard him talk—not very fluently, to be sure, for he was not a very articulate person, though she found him a strangely moving one, with his eloquent eyes and his good, plain face—about the school at Rocca Pirenza, she told herself that her distaste for travel was because she desired to find herself once more established, once more in her own niche in the world, once more with her own work to do. That, she said, was why she did not care to keep on with that idle, beautiful journey, upon which she had entered so gladly.

But Flavian did not yield to her wish—her whim, he called it. She must see the whole of his beloved land. She must appreciate the grounds of his

pride and patriotism. She must bow her spirit at St. Peter's; she must feel the mystic sadness and beauty of the Campagna; she must see the treasures of the little towns, rich in art, rich in history; she must see the incomparable panorama of beauty rolling away seaward from Naples. It would not take too long. He would commandeer an automobile and they would journey like American nabobs!

Cordelia, of course, yielded, innerly convicted of sin because she did not really enjoy the prospect. Was it because she was a Puritan that sin had a retroactive quality for her? Flavian seemed to be as free from any cloud as if their reconciliation had literally blotted out his fault.

It was a wonderful journey, and there were moments in it when her emotion rose to the height of her husband's demand. There were pictures before which her soul prostrated itself in reverence; there were cloisters whose beauty brought the tears stingingly to her eyes; there were statues that made her catch her breath. As for the country through which they traveled—now by motor, now by horse-drawn carriage, occasionally by train—her sensitive susceptibility to beauty paid it instant tribute. Gray olive groves upon the slopes; popped fields; vineyards neat as some child's toy; ancient walled cities upon the hillsides, mellow with time and sun; towers and palaces; cathedrals and monasteries; the song of nightingales—she took them all into her heart, until it ached with the load of beauty.

But Flavian had been right; he had married a reformer. It was not many days before she was crying out to him that she could not bear the sight of the old, old women, bent almost double beneath the loads they carried.

"If I knew enough Italian," she told him, flushed, half laughing, wholly in earnest, "I declare I should stop and



At the head of a flight of stone steps in front of them appeared the figure of one of the
and offered to show the new Countess



Edmund Frederick
1916

monks. He greeted them hospitably, said they could have luncheon in half an hour, Pirenza the glories of his ancient establishment.

harangue them! And as for the women who break stone by the roadsides—with the dust flying into their poor old eyes—upon my word I think I shall get out of the carriage the next time I see one and take her along with us! And I shall certainly snatch the goggles from the eyes of her pig of a husband! The idea! The man protected, the woman not! Flavian, you are the most incomprehensible people! Think how you make love! Think how you reverence women! Think of Dante and Petrarch! Think of all the heavenly Madonnas we have seen! And then think of the old women carrying loads that the poor, patient donkeys couldn't bear, and cracking stones by the roadside, and every one taking it for granted, quite easily and jauntily! Now, aren't you incomprehensible?" She softened the excited asperity of her words by her smile, and by the touch of her hand upon his arm.

"Is it incomprehensible to feel obliged to live?" asked Flavian indifferently. "The peasants have a penchant for life, my dear. And they have to work to sustain it, men and women, too. They're used to it—they don't work with the muscles you would use, you know! We are a poor people, Cordelia mia, not like you Americans. We have to work hard."

"But not so cruelly hard, so inhumanly hard," Cordelia insisted. "Of course, your roads are wonderful, wonderful! But why not let them be a little less wonderful and not have your old women breaking stone?"

"My dear, the roads must always be in perfection. Who knows when our army will need to move across them?"

"Your army!" Cordelia was vehement. "I don't want to be offensive, Flavian, but I can scarcely contain myself when I think of it. Such a little country, such a poor country—you yourself have said it, and I see it everywhere—and yet you support that great

army! No tiny little town, too poor to educate its children, too poor to give its women a moment of rest from the time they are grown until the time they lie down to die, but must support those handsome, useless, idle soldiers, those picturesque monks and friars! Do you have seventeen-year locusts over here? They are a periodic plague with us, sweeping across the country, devouring the crops, spreading devastation. Do you know, since I have been here, I think of them always as I see the soldiers and the friars, the barracks and the monasteries. Why, not even a rich nation could support such a horde of devourers!"

But she had touched her husband in his most sensitive pride. His face was cold as he answered her.

"Pray don't talk like an ignorant tourist, Cordelia," he said curtly. "Italy maintains her place among the great powers only by her army and her navy. You forget we are not long a united nation. We could not maintain ourselves, could not command the respect of other countries, if we had not the means at hand to punish a lack of respect. Think how they have swarmed over us in the past. Think of their greed—now Spain, now France, now Austria—Austria!" His voice shook with hatred. "Think how they have all tried to despoil us, to divide us, to use us for their own greedy ends! An army? Roads over which that army may project itself at any insolent foe upon our frontiers? Why, there is not a woman in Italy—there is not a lady in Italy from the queen down—who would not herself break stones by the road that we might maintain our unity and our prestige! Not one!"

Sometimes his vehemence would silence her; again she would try to learn, with a new sort of thoughtfulness, what it was that he loved with such passion.

"It isn't your fellow countrymen, Flavian," she said. "I mean the gen-

eral run of them. You don't simply ache to do something for all these people we pass in the road, for the bowed-down old women and the dirty little children."

"Oh, you exaggerate! The people are very comfortable. They aren't used to soft living—they don't want it. Heaven knows they're bad enough as it is—lazy and immoral, obstinate and thieving! What they would be if kind-hearted little ignoramuses like you pampered them and petted them, it's impossible to say."

"You know, Flavian," she said, with some courage, for she felt that she was indeed the ignoramus he had named her and that her criticisms and surmises might easily prove irritating, "I'm half inclined to believe you're mistaken about this love for Italy you think they all feel. After all, one doesn't see the queen breaking stone—or you, either! The stone breakers support quite an ornamental nobility as well as an army and a church! Somehow, it seems to me there's a hitch somewhere. In one breath, you declare how passionately you love Italy, and yet all the time I see how indifferent you are to what makes Italy—the people. And as for them—"

"Canaille!" interrupted Flavian.

"As for them," she continued, "see how they come to our country, where conditions are a little less difficult for them. Where's that love of theirs that makes them so glad to break stones? What is patriotism? I wish I knew!"

Sometimes Flavian would expostulate angrily with her; sometimes he would contemptuously intimate that because Americans were not a single people, they knew nothing of racial honor, of racial pride and ideals; sometimes he would tell her, with a stereotyped gallantry that grated upon her ears, that her lovely lips were made for better things than philosophical disquisition; and sometimes he would teas-

ingly answer: "Some day you'll ask me what is love!"

But in whatever mood he replied to her, Cordelia felt at times a chilled sense that he was not interested in her views, that he had no desire to arrive at a knowledge of the working of her mind, as she had of his. He was satisfied with a relation deeper, perhaps, certainly more simple, than one in which intellectual companionship was a constituent, with a happiness in which the mind, after all, had little part.

As for her, she sometimes felt that that stage of their love had passed for her on the day when she had accepted and forgiven the fact of Vittoria Cambi. From that moment, she had demanded, quite unconsciously, some new basis for their life together, in which the black-haired widow whose "friendship" had helped to "form" him would not be, as it were, her rival. But Flavian seemed unaware of and indifferent to the state toward which she strove.

And so the honeymoon and the honeymoon trip prolonged themselves into June. June found them at Naples, the point from which they were to set out on the final stage of their journey toward Rocca Pirenza. Naples, vivid, gay, lively, noisy, picturesque with life beyond any of the places where she had already stopped, gave Cordelia a few days of wholly unquestioning enjoyment. They were lodged in a hotel at the top of the city, and from their windows they saw not only the whole city drop away in tier upon tier of mellow stone, of green garden, toward the bay, but the wonderful bay itself, unspeakably beautiful with its islands and its mountains.

Flavian had business to transact in Naples, and Cordelia was left alone for hours. She enjoyed them utterly. She walked the streets alone—something that Flavian did not like to have her do; she stood and laughed delightedly

at the sight of herds of goats or cows, driven through the streets and milked at the doorway of each customer; she exclaimed over the picturesque donkey carts, over the gardens and flowers; and especially she was never tired of sitting in her balcony and watching the wonderful blue of the harbor, the purple of the islands, the smoky top of Vesuvius brooding over it all. She did not stop to analyze her emotion; she did not ask why the mere fact of her loneliness intensified her enjoyment, when, at the beginning of her trip, it had been the fact of Flavian's companionship that had deepened the delight of every moment.

On the second day of their stay, he went downtown after their late breakfast, bidding her not to expect him much before dinner and advising a siesta. During the early afternoon, she acted on his suggestion; Naples in June was sufficiently hot to make the advice admirable. When she arose, the maid with whom Antoinette had insisted upon providing her suggested that, of course, the signora would have tea upon the terrace at Bertolini's—every one did. Earlier in the season, doubtless, the signora would have met many friends there, and even to-day perhaps she would find some one she knew. There was an American steamer in that morning. But even if this good fortune should not befall her, it was enough of a pleasure to sit upon the mountain-high balcony and watch the city and the sea below.

Cordelia acted upon Madelina's suggestion. Although the tables on the aerial terrace were well occupied, and although the English language, spoken largely with an unmistakable nasal quality, was heard on every hand, she did not see any one whom she knew. However, that did not disturb her. The view was all that Madelina had claimed for it. The little cakes were delicious, the tea as good as if she had been in

England. She was enjoying the sensuous delights of the moment—the rapture of the eyes, the satisfaction of the palate—when some one approached her table from behind her and spoke her name:

"Countess Pirenza."

She had not yet grown used to hearing that name and title. She had been so much alone with Flavian that she had had no chance to get used to it. She always heard it with a little start, with a desire to laugh apologetically, with a blush. She subdued the start and the laugh successfully as she glanced upward, but she did not subdue the blush. It was so ridiculous—"Countess Pirenza!" She was Cordelia Stimson, of Wheelville! The eyes into which she looked were those of Eustis Nesbit. She gave a little cry of pleasure:

"How very nice! Are you alone? Then won't you join me? But I thought you had gone back long ago to Rocca Pirenza?"

"I did go back long ago," he answered, smiling and dropping into the chair opposite her. "But I came down here to see my sister, who left for home this morning. It was my only way to see her. She paid me one visit at Rocca Pirenza, and nothing can ever induce her to repeat the experience."

"Is it as bad as all that?" asked Cordelia, smiling.

"Mary found it so," he replied conservatively. "But she's a very civilized person. She finds all of Italy almost too unhygienic to be borne, even for the sake of its beauty. This time she was merely attending an international conference on rural infant mortality! Naples was the limit of her endurance. Rocca Pirenza is— Well, I shan't try to prejudice you. You'll be seeing it shortly, I suppose?"

"In a few days," answered Cordelia. "And do you know I shall be awfully glad, no matter how dreadful it is? I'm

afraid I'm a dull person. I cannot play indefinitely without growing a little— Oh, I don't know what to call it. 'Bored' is too definite a word."

"I know what you mean," he answered, smiling.

She thought his smile very friendly, very illuminating. His face was plain, rather worn and tired looking. His fine gray eyes were a little sad. In repose, his looks suggested to her some one familiar—she could not think just who it was. Yes, she could, too! It was—absurd as it seemed!—it was the look of one of the Lincoln portraits. Of course, she told herself, correcting her first impression, this English countenance opposite hers was not scarred, as the rough-hewn face of the great American had been, by weariness and responsibility, but it had something of the same quality of sadness—except when he smiled. Then he was suddenly boyish.

"Only children and a few very child-like souls can bear an existence all holiday," he was saying. "Indeed, I don't believe that children could."

"I'm so glad that you're at Rocca Pirenza," she told him, with a sudden outburst of frankness. "I think I should have been quite overcome if I had gone there, the only foreigner, the first foreigner, at that! But you have broken the way for me! I shan't be so much afraid now!"

"You needn't have been afraid in any event," he answered. "They're very simple and very lovable, all of them, even the wildest ones. You would have found the right note to touch, I'm sure. But I'm very glad you're coming. Of course I'm a fanatic about my schools, and it means a great deal to me to have the family itself interested in them. It hasn't been"—he laughed without rancor—"up to this time. I'm sure that Mrs. Hardinge thinks me a great fool and a good deal of a meddler in what doesn't concern me. Count Flavian has

been away a great deal, and as for Count Benedict—" He broke off and left the sentence unfinished.

"And as for Count Benedict?" she repeated, holding him to the subject.

"When you meet him—I understand you haven't met him yet—you'll understand that nothing could seem to him less interesting than what I'm trying to do. He is—he is— Oh, well, why should I try to draw him for you, when you will see him in a day or two?"

"I wish you would," said Cordelia. "My husband has talked very little about him, and what Mrs. Hardinge said was rather impulsive, vague criticism. I really have no impression of him whatever, in my mind."

"Well, he is an anachronism. That is, he would seem an anachronism to you or to me; perhaps he is not so great a one here. They're still pretty medieval in Italy, especially in the south. Benedict always gives me the feeling of what a roistering, magnificently carousing robber baron must have been. I oughtn't to have said that, perhaps," he added hastily. "You may find him merely a very agreeable man of the world. Both the brothers were educated partly in England, you know—their father had quite an extravagant admiration for Gladstone, which resulted in their having a year or two at Cambridge. Whenever I think of Benedict at Cambridge, I'm obliged to laugh." He did so now. Then he looked at her anxiously. "I hope I haven't said anything I ought not to have said."

"Not in the least," replied Cordelia. "I wanted to know. And Flavian, as I said, hasn't been very communicative about Benedict. Now tell me something about your schools. I want you to put me to work as soon as I am settled."

His fine eyes lighted with enthusiasm. He told her how, when he had come to this out-of-the-way little relic of feu-

dalism—a walled mountain town with the stone huts of the peasants crouching about the knees of the castle of their lord—there had been no school at all for the children. He told how they had grown up in ignorance and the invariable accompaniment of ignorance, vice. He told how the boys went off, some to Naples to become a part of the scourge of that city's slums, some to join bandit gangs throughout the wild mountain region; he told how the girls drifted either into the animallike drudgery of the peasant wife, or the bestiality of those same depraved circles in Naples that claimed some of the boys.

"But what," cried Cordelia, pale with indignation, "what were the authorities thinking of? No schools? What was the Church thinking of? What was my husband's family thinking of?"

"None of them was thinking, that is all," he replied. "You must not be horrified, countess. Conditions in Rocca Pirenza are no different from what they are in a dozen—in a hundred—similar places. There is very little money for public education—"

"Only for their army!" cried Cordelia vehemently.

"Ah, well, no one can blame Italy for maintaining an army," he answered. "That is, not while the rest of us, who have more years of success and union and power behind us, set her the example. One feels here what an infinitely slow process civilization is—"

"But see," Cordelia interrupted bewilderedly, "see how they had a civilization all in flower when the rest of us were barbarians! I don't understand it. Sometimes, when I have talked to my husband or to my sister-in-law, I have felt myself the crudest, the most ignorant thing in the world. There's no art, there's no music, there's no architecture, behind me—I am raw to an extent! And they are the civilized ones, the cultivated, perhaps even the wise! And then again— Have

you ever been to America, Mr. Nesbit? Yes? Were you ever out among the Indian tribes of Arizona and New Mexico? Yes? Then perhaps you will understand what I mean when I say that sometimes these perfectly wonderful people seem to me to be a sort of European Hopi— How dreadfully I am talking!"

She came to a sudden pause, crimson with a swift sense of disloyalty, of utterly bad taste. And yet there was a sort of light-heartedness about her, now that she had said some of the things that had been gathering in her mind all these weeks—these weeks since the sense that her marriage was not the utterly perfect union she had believed had left her with a mind a little dissatisfied.

"Don't be worried about how you sound," he answered her comfortably, reassuringly. "I've been through it all myself. Just use me as a safety valve whenever you feel the inclination." He smiled his charming, youthful smile upon her.

"Do you know," she said earnestly, "I think it an extremely fortunate thing for me that you happen to be settled at Rocca Pirenza? What I've been saying is not the sort of thing that one would want to say to one's Italian relatives, is it?"

"Oh, I don't think they'd take it very seriously. You know how the secure disregard criticism. The great and the provincial both are unaffected by standards outside their own circles. Here comes the count now."

He stood up, and Flavian came forward to join them—graceful, handsome, debonair, even a trifle of the dandy in contrast with the tall, rather awkward, rather badly dressed figure of Eustis Nesbit.

He greeted his wife affectionately, his friend—if friends they could be called—warmly.

"Madelina told me where to find

you," he informed Cordelia. "You've been having a good time, I can see that. I'll wager you two have planned a second James Winant House under the very shadow of my walls. Has the countess told you all about the James Winant House, Nesbit?"

"Not a word," replied Nesbit. "She has been patiently listening to me tell her about my own enterprises."

"We've been speculating upon the Italian temperament, too, Flavian," confessed Cordelia, smiling.

"Why did you waste time that way? Why didn't you merely wait for me to expound it to you?"

He spoke idly, amusedly. It was quite evident that he felt no slightest desire to enter into any confederation of interests that the two idealists might have formed.

"Expound it now for us," said Cordelia. "Let us judge how well you understand yourself."

"Very well. In the first place, we're very direct; we see what we want and we go after it—straight! Even though we may sometimes have to be direct by subtleties, if you understand what I mean. We're very practical; we're good bargainers; we're excellent business men. We're joyful—we like what you call a good time, and we know how to get it! We're simple-hearted, too; we love our women and our families and our country, and we hate all our enemies with a plain, uncomplicated hatred. There, now—doesn't that about cover the ground? Do you make any more of us, or any less, than that?" But he did not wait for an answer, going on instead: "Why don't you dine with us to-night, Nesbit? You have nothing better to do, have you?"

"Nothing better, certainly," Nesbit replied hesitatingly. He glanced at Cordelia. Her bright, friendly look warmly seconded her husband's invitation. "I'd like it of all things," he finished.

CHAPTER XII.

It seemed to Cordelia that she had been traveling a long, long time upward through the mountains. The first stage of the journey they had made by train. Two or three hours out of Naples they had left the railroad and had begun the two days' trip by carriage. Their own conveyances would meet them for the final stage of the journey. Meantime, every five or six hours they stopped to change horses. They were traveling in two vehicles, one comparatively luxurious, in which Flavian and his wife sat, the other more primitive, in which Madelina, a great quantity of luggage, and Flavian's man, were disposed.

At first Cordelia had been charmed beyond power of expression by the sheer beauty and grandeur of the country through which they drove. The mountains, blue and purple and silver against the horizon, flashing here and there on their higher slopes with patches of still unmelted snow, seemed to her bolder, more spectacular, so to speak, than any she had seen at home. The nearer views were as beautiful. Never had she seen such charm of bright hues as in the wild flowers that lined all their road upward for the first few hours. The peasants whom they passed, too, did not oppress her with the sense of their hardships. The women, washing their clothes by the wayside streams, seemed as gay—seemed more gay, indeed—than a picnic party at home. She speculated upon how much of this effect was due to the wonderful color of their adornments—of their kerchiefs; she had never seen such solferinos, such mulberrys, splashed with greens and reds—of their antique corals, their long, gold earrings. Even the beggars, hastily assuming attitudes or uncovering their sores as the carriage drew near, were less dreadful than they had been in Naples. And through the joy of



At the entrance to her new home was gathered a motley array of servants to welcome the master.

the summer day ran the current of deeper satisfaction—they were reaching home and work; they were escaping the bondage of mere pleasuring.

"Oh, Flavian," she cried suddenly, turning her eyes from the wonderful prospect to her husband, half dozing by her side, "I'm so glad we are getting toward home!"

He roused himself to smile sleepily upon her and to give her hand an affectionate pressure.

"You'll have a lot to do when you get there," he warned her.

"I know," she answered joyfully. "That's why I'm so pleased. I haven't a great lady's capacity for idleness, I'm afraid. I'm going down to see Mr. Nesbit's schools the very first thing."

"Oh, I wasn't thinking of Nesbit and his brats," replied Flavian. "I was thinking of rendering the castle moderately habitable. I've asked Da Silva, an architect friend of mine, to come up in two weeks and see what can be done to modernize the place a little. Otherwise, you'd probably leave me at the end of a month." He laughed. "One

assumes responsibilities when one marries a wife from the land of modern conveniences."

With a great clatter, they dashed into the stone-laid street of a little town. The children parted to right and left of them and stood watching them with excited eyes. Flavian thrust a hand into his pocket and tossed out a handful of soldi. The youngsters scrambled wildly for the copper coins.

"Oh, Flavian, I wish you wouldn't!" Cordelia's face was flushed, as if with a personal mortification. "It's so—so dreadful—to see them struggling for those pitiful pennies!"

"Why, they like it." Flavian was truly astonished at her attitude.

"It doesn't seem human," she objected insistently. "It reduces them to the level of a pack of dogs to whom one tosses bones."

"Well, what better are they?" Then he softened his asperity. "You're too serious about it, too, Cordelia. It doesn't amount to anything one way or the other."

He was probably right, she thought to herself—she *was* exigent about trifles. So she said no more, even though some of the children who had missed in the scramble were still pursuing the carriage with panting cries and outstretched hands. Instead, she called his attention to the undulating grace with which the women moved away from the stone fountain in the center of the little town, with time-darkened copper water jugs on their heads.

"They look positively biblical," she said. And then she added: "How frightfully laborious, to have to carry water so! No wonder there's so much dirt."

Higher up the mountain, outside the village, stood the monastery at which they were to lunch. As they drew near it, they passed more and more people upon the road—here a group of brilliantly clad peasant women making the

first stage of a pilgrimage to Rome; there a wretched cripple, cowering well away from the reach of their horses' hoofs and of Guido's long, pliant whip; here a group of soldiers, in gray-green khaki; there a beggar incredibly agile in keeping up with the carriage, incredibly fluent in appeal.

"It's been a bad year," said Flavian. "I've seldom seen these bandits so persistent. Got that one, didn't you, Guido?" he called to the driver, whose long whip had played around the bare legs of an extremely insistent beggar.

"Si, *signor*, thanks be to the good San Ursulus."

"They swarm along this road," explained Flavian, "because it is the rule of the monastery of San Ursulus not to turn away any poor or sick."

"That is splendid," cried Cordelia.

"That is folly," Flavian corrected her.

"However, I dare say the brethren grow fairly expert in weeding out the goats of impostors—what is it you call them?—fakes—from the sheep of the truly sick and poor."

The horses came to a pause within the shaded courtyard of the monastery. At the head of a flight of stone steps in front of them appeared the figure of one of the monks. He greeted them hospitably, said that they could have luncheon in half an hour, and offered to show the new Countess Pirenza the glories of his ancient establishment. He spoke a little English, of which he was childishly vain. He had once been sent to London for six months on some mission connected with his order.

"Dat is how I speak da Engliss so fine," he told her, beaming.

When the meal was ready, they were summoned to the refectory. There were no other strangers at that hour, and they occupied the long room alone. The young brother who waited upon them was evidently immensely smitten by Cordelia's bright, fair beauty, unlike that of the women to whom he was

accustomed. He could scarcely take his eyes from her. He kept piling her plate with the plain, excellent food, and filling her glass with the red wine, for which, Flavian told her, the monastery was famous. Suddenly he broke out in profuse Italian to Flavian. Did the Signor Count purpose to go on that very afternoon? Yes? Did the Signor Count think that that was wise or safe? The mountains were infested with bandits. There had been, during the past two months, a great many holdups, a great many outrages. And the signora—he begged her pardon—the contessa—would it not be a shame, a crime, if the contessa's entry into her own domain should be marred by any violence, any fright, any outrage?

Flavian seemed interested in the young monk's news, but it did not deter him from continuing the journey that afternoon. He smiled as he explained to Cordelia that he believed the young man's anxiety—really, even though unconsciously—due to a desire to keep her bright presence in the neighborhood of the monastery as long as possible.

"He wanted to heap your plate and fill your glass again this evening," he told her when they were once again upon the road. His own eyes were amorous. He pressed closer to her side and kissed her shoulder through her long pongee coat. "I don't wonder at him, poor wretch!" he ended.

"Nonsense! I thought he seemed a very nice boy indeed," said Cordelia.

"Did I say that he wasn't? Did I suggest such a thing? Am I so lacking in egotism as to say that a man is not 'nice' for adoring you? On the contrary, I paid him a compliment of attributing taste to him. I didn't mean to imply that he was filled with unholy longings for another man's wife. He probably regarded you in no more worldly way than if you had been one of his Madonnas come to life and condescending to a meal in the refectory.

And for that matter," Flavian continued lightly, "I dare say the poor fellows often regard the Madonnas in their niches with a sort of human longing. Thank Heaven, my family didn't educate me for the Church!"

Cordelia smiled affectionately upon him.

"You would have been rather funny if you had taken orders, wouldn't you? I think, on the whole, it's better for the Church that you're in the wine-and-oil business. Do you suppose there was anything real in what the young monk was saying about bandits in the mountains?"

"I dare say. It's a lawless region. And, as I was saying a little while back, it has been a poor season—that always means an increase in beggary and brigandage. But I don't think they'd be likely to make an attempt on us."

"They mightn't know who we were in time to treat us with distinguished respect," suggested Cordelia, half laughing. "What do they do? Rob people, just, or hold them for ransom in caves? It's too absurd! I feel as if I must be living in a comic opera."

"Well, if we were rich Americans, they would probably try to hold us for a ransom. But since we are impoverished Italians, they'd probably let us go, after relieving us of our belongings. And since, in addition, we're Pirenzas of Rocca Pirenza, and rather well known as persons who do not overlook an injury, they would probably let us pass on without even that tribute."

Something seemed to be wrong with the harness. Guido climbed down from his seat and began pulling the leather, buckling and unbuckling it. The driver of the wagon back of them joined him. Some pieces of string were produced from pockets and repairs were made. But half an hour had been lost, and Flavian irritably demanded that it should be made up; they would not arrive at the village where they were to

spend the night any too early, even though they made their schedule time.

Guido whipped up his horses, and they went almost galloping up the incline that curved round and round the side of the mountain, making the steep ascent in a spiral. Cordelia murmured a protest; it was dreadful to speed the poor things on so hard an up grade, she said, and they weren't powerful-looking beasts at the best.

"For Heaven's sake, Cordelia," exclaimed Flavian shortly, "must you always be sentimental? Can't you occasionally be practical? We're trying to do a given thing in a given time; can't you sink your theories for once, and not find fault with our trying to do it?"

His pettish outbreak seemed to Cordelia so uncalled for, so unjust, that she retired into an offended silence. What an amazingly variable person he was, this husband of hers, this stranger, by whose side she was journeying in a strange, wild country! Now the trifling gallant, now the lover, and then, in the twinkling of an eye, almost, an impatient despot, resentful of suggestion. Well, perhaps she herself was rather trying, with her constant objections to things as they were.

Suddenly she was jerked almost to her knees. The wheel horse had stumbled, had gone down. Flavian was flung beside her. Guido jerked the fallen horse to his feet again. Flavian hastily asked her if she was hurt, and upon her negative reply, jumped from the carriage and ran forward to see the extent of the damage. There ensued a wild, incomprehensible jabber of Italian. Cordelia could follow none of it. She inferred, from tones and gestures, that Guido wished to go back to the monastery, now an hour behind them, for a fresh horse, and that Flavian insisted upon pushing on with the stumbler, which, it appeared, had so wrenched its leg that it could only limp along.

The matter, of course, was settled as Flavian decreed, Guido climbing back into his seat after having declared, with an eloquent shrug and with palms extended to heaven, in entire repudiation of whatever might ensue, that future tragedy was none of his affair. Flavian, seating himself again in the carriage, poured forth an angry volley of abuse upon horses, drivers, monasteries, and mountain roads. Then, as they went slowly forward, he settled himself in his corner and belligerently announced his intention to sleep.

Cordelia was drowsy, too. The long day in the sunshine and the air, the slow movement of the carriage, perhaps even the potency of the red wine of the monastery, all induced a slumbrous mood in her. She, too, adjusted rugs and cushions on her side of the carriage and closed her eyes upon the glories of the sunset beginning to stream through the mountain defiles.

On and on they crept, the rear wagon accommodating its pace to that of the crippled front one. Cordelia slept and woke and slept and woke again. In her moments of consciousness, she had the impression of having jolted along like this for ages. But she sank back almost immediately into uncomfortable sleep. Finally she opened her eyes to discover that daylight was gone, and that they were creeping along in the dusk. Flavian, happening to wake simultaneously, looked at his watch, holding it close to his eyes. He muttered an oath.

"We should have been there, at Monte Alevano, by this time," he said, "and we're still two hours away from it. The moon won't be up until nearly midnight."

"Why don't we camp out all night, if there's going to be any difficulty about getting to Monte Alevano?" asked Cordelia.

But Flavian irritably negatived this suggestion. They must make Monte

Alevano that night and have an early start the next morning if they were to reach Rocca Pirenza by the next nightfall. Besides, they had no food for the horses, they had no food for themselves. They must push on. After all, there was probably no danger——

"Danger?" cried Cordelia in surprise. "But the road is wide and extremely good, especially for the mountains. And surely Guido has lamps or candles or something to light——"

"I'm not talking about the danger of collision," explained Flavian. "But we're going through a very wild stretch of country during the next two hours, the favorite scene for those holdups of which your monkish admirer talked. That is all."

"Why, Flavian! Is it really true? Somehow, I couldn't help believing it all a sort of picturesque exaggeration."

"Oh, there's no real danger, of course," said Flavian. "Only I didn't want you to be alarmed on your journey home."

"I think I should probably be more entertained than alarmed," said Cordelia, smiling.

Then she settled back again in her corner. She could scarcely take this danger seriously enough to be wakeful about it. Her eyes closed again and soon she had drifted off into sleep. It was the sound of a pistol shot that roused her this time.

She found herself standing in the carriage, her hand upon Flavian's arm, her own voice ringing in her ears. "What is it, what is it?" That was what she was calling out. From the wagon behind came Madelina's shrieks, piercing the darkness. The horses were rearing, Guido in his high seat still holding the reins and attempting to manage them. Before them in the darkness she could see figures, mounted on horses. They seemed to be in a very narrow defile, high-walled, with rocks on either side. To turn was impossible. Even

as she glanced backward to measure the possibility of flight, she realized that they were beset in the rear as in the front. There seemed, as far as she could make out, a dozen horsemen in the gloom, and they themselves numbered but four men—the two drivers, Flavian, and Flavian's man—and two women. It was a highly unequal combat. Flavian had his hand upon his pocket. She realized that he was feeling for his revolver.

"Don't, don't! Don't try to resist! Don't you see it is useless?" she cried passionately. She held tight to his arm. He tried to shake her off. "Ask them what they want—give them what they want——"

And then her torrent of frightened appeal was stayed. A figure detached itself from the dusky group before them and came toward the carriage. From the side of the road a man had appeared on foot, who seized the frightened horses by the bridle and soothed them. The rider, it appeared, as he emerged from the gloom, held his right arm outstretched. In his hand she caught the gleam of metal, when the smoky carriage lamp shone upon him. He called out something; in her panic all her hardly acquired Italian of the past weeks utterly vanished. Perhaps she would not have known the language of the highwaymen even under less fearsome circumstances; but as it was, she understood nothing. There was registered, however, upon her consciousness the fact that the voice that spoke was singularly musical. It was like a wonderful baritone dropping from song to recitative.

At the sound of that voice, she felt a shudder run through Flavian's arm, to which she was still clinging. He called out something, hoarsely, violently. The horseman answered with a cry. Flavian jerked himself loose from his wife's hands; he leaped from the carriage; he ran toward the horseman; he

seized the horse's bridle. Cordelia gave a little moan of terror and sank down upon the carriage seat, covering her eyes with her hand. What madness had impelled him to this display of violence, to this dangerous defiance?

From the carriage behind, Madelina's shrieks continued with the regularity of an automaton. All around them was a babel of confusion, men talking to horses, horses whinnying, Guido, on his knees upon the roadside, calling earnestly upon the whole of the heavenly hierarchy for succor; and through it all, dominating it all, the volley of question and answer between her husband and the horseman upon whose bridle he hung.

Suddenly the rider turned in his saddle, gave a peculiar whistle, and his men closed in about him. He spoke to them rapidly, and again she paid unconscious tribute to the charm of his voice. Her strained ears caught but one familiar sound—the name Pirenza. And then, suddenly, inexplicably, they all dissolved again in the darkness. All of them were gone, the men holding the horses' heads, the riders seen dimly through the gloom. Only Guido, calling upon his saints, still knelt in the road; only Madelina fired into the quiet air the volley of her shrieks.

Flavian came back to the carriage. She could feel him shaking like a man in an ague. He called sharply to Guido:

"Get up out of the road, you fool and coward!" There was no tremor in his voice, though his body still shook. "Get up! Cease that noise! Mount to your place! Drive on!"

"But, Signor Count, is it that they are gone?"

Guido ceased his invocations to Heaven, but remained upon his knees to be ready properly to renew his prayers should occasion seem to demand.

"As you see. Cordelia, can you in-

duce that fool of a woman to stop her yelling?"

"Madelina! Madelina! Be still! There is no more danger." Cordelia's voice was quite steady as she called out to her maid. Then she turned to her husband. "What happened?" she asked.

"Oh, 'as I foretold," answered Flavian lightly, although the tremor had not yet ceased to shake his frame, "when they found out who we were, they courteously withdrew. It is well known to even the least intelligent of the banditti that no Pirenza has the price of a ransom. It seems their agents in Naples had instructed them that a rich American was traveling through the mountains to-day. They made the mistake of taking our party for his. That is all. Drive on, Guido. The contessa will perish of hunger before you reach Monte Alevano."

Cordelia was dazed almost as much by his explanation as by the incident itself. She sank back among her cushions and stole half-frightened, wholly bewildered glances toward him. Through the darkness she could just discern the strong line of his profile. It seemed very firm, very hard, even. And his voice had rung out, clear, incisive, not to be disobeyed. And yet, from time to time, she could still feel his body shaken by that strange shudder of excitement.

CHAPTER XIII.

Seen from a distance, Rocca Pirenza did not lack charm. A tiny walled town, dominated by its turreted castle, it basked, mellow-toned, in the sunshine. Beyond it, the mountains seemed to rise abruptly, sheer and barren, to the sky. Below it, against the steep sides of the hills, vineyards clung precariously; and all the narrow plateaus among the hills were carefully cultivated—little strips checkerboarded off in plats of varied green. Cordelia, ap-

proaching it as the westering sun bathed it in a soft effulgence of color, felt that it had been maligned by those who had talked to her about it. It was a little, medieval, Italian mountain town, beautiful like any other!

But when the carriage had passed through the great southern gate of the wall, with the thirteenth-century watch-tower still miraculously intact above it, she began to feel the oppression of the place. The sun had gone; there was no longer a tender golden light to transform the cluster of stone huts and the castle into a city of glory. The air, even the wild, mountain air of June, was malodorous. The horses' feet slipped upon the narrow cobbled roadways, slimy with refuse.

They had not advanced far into the interior of the little city when they were obliged to leave the carriage. The streets became too narrow to allow the vehicle passage.

"But how will they ever get the luggage up?" asked Cordelia.

"Easily enough," answered Flavian. He nodded toward the population of the village which seemed concentrated about them—men, women, and children, all regarding them with soft, dark-eyed curiosity. "They will carry it."

He spoke to some of the people whom he knew. Their faces shone with gratification. One of the older boys ran to take the horses out from the shafts. A swarm descended upon the rugs and bags, and even the trunks. The little children crowded close and touched Cordelia's dress with grimy hands; the women murmured mellifluous greetings to the new countess. From the cave-like interior of a little wine shop, lit by smoking open lamps of oil, men came forward to speak to Flavian. He responded to them all briefly, with a touch of what seemed to Cordelia haughtiness in the indifference of his manner. She was beholding him in a new rôle; he was the overlord of these people. He

offered her his arm and they went up the narrow, winding, slippery streets toward the palace. Close upon their heels surged the carriers. Pigs and goats, running wild in the streets, grunted and baaed, and fled from their approach.

At the entrance to her new home was gathered a motley array of servitors to welcome the master. There was a butler, impeccable in manner, even if his uniform was almost in the final stage of disintegration; there was a shabby, bustling little man whom she recognized, when his name was mentioned, as the factor of her husband's property; there was a very bent, very fat old woman, whom Flavian kissed with affection, and who, Cordelia learned, had been his nurse. There was a cook in the background—Cordelia tried not to feel a fastidious revolt at the thought of food prepared by that untidy, greasy woman. There was a straggling assortment of men and boys, and there was a maid or two, the whole miniature army horribly out at the elbows, out at the shoes—some of them were even barefoot—almost scarecrows in their sartorial make-up. Poverty and wildness were written all over them.

A blurred memory of some scene in one of Scott's novels flashed upon her, and then, blindingly clear, the neat, orderly gray street upon which she had been born, the snug, smug houses, the maids, all trim in print or in black and white. She knew on the instant what was about to happen to her—she was going to be disgracefully homesick! She was going to be frightened! She was going to declare that she could not bear the ancient savagery of this life which she had so blindly, so ignorantly, so blithely, accepted. Not even his love had been of the quality she had dreamed it. Nothing was familiar, secure. She could not bear it! Then she turned her head; she met Flavian's eyes fastened upon her with a look of boyish appeal. He was waiting for her word, he was

waiting for her commendation, her appreciation. This to him was home, more passionately beloved, perhaps, than ever Wheelville had been beloved by any of its sons or daughters. She could not bear to disappoint those waiting eyes, that waiting face of his.

"Oh, Flavian," she said—and her voice was a little broken by the effort with which she had put down that surge of fear and homesickness—"oh, Flavian, I'm so glad to be at home!"

His face cleared, brightened wonderfully.

"We will make it a home worthy of you," he promised.

He kissed her hand, and the group about them smiled in benediction upon the act. Then he looked toward his people inquiringly.

"The cardinal's suite has been made ready, Count Flavian," little Mr. Neri, the factor, answered the look of questioning.

Flavian nodded with satisfaction. Some one, who carried a brass lamp with its wicks flaring in an open bowl, went before them up the stone steps that had been worn down at the edges by the passing feet of many generations. At the first landing, a door was thrown open and they were ushered into a great room. It had for Cordelia's nostrils the faint, dusty mustiness of a vault, but she realized insensibly that no gusts of wind from without could ever dissipate that odor. Nearly seven centuries had passed over that building—twenty generations had lived and died, loved and hated, fought and played there; no airs of to-day could ever blow it clear of that palpable reminder of death and decay.

"You will not be able to see the decorations," Flavian was telling her nervously, "until to-morrow. They are quite wonderful—the frescoes. They were done over in the sixteenth century, when Paolo Pirenza was cardinal. Light all the candles, some one!" His voice

rang with sharp impatience. "The contessa wishes to see her new home."

They bustled about, lighting the candles in all the bronze sconces on the wall. Cordelia, in the greater illumination, saw a magnificently carved marble mantel, saw a wonderful old chair beneath a faded cardinal canopy. It was a splendid room—there was no doubt about that. But again she thought of Cousin Susie's parlor—one could set half a dozen of Cousin Susie's parlors in this apartment and scarcely find it crowded—and she had to tighten her throat against an inclination to sob.

By and by, in a vast bedchamber, she was changing her clothes with the help of a very scornful Madelina. Madelina had a Florentine contempt for every other spot on the earth's surface as inferior to her own. This wild, almost inaccessible region up mountain passes, of brigands, of castles less convenient than the *pension* in which she had worked in her own city, did not at all appeal to her.

"The contessa will stay here but for two or three months each year," she predicted confidently. "No more is to be expected. It is a wilderness. There is no one with whom the contessa could speak. An apartment in Florence for the winter, now—ah, the contessa would enjoy that! And perhaps a villa in the hills outside, up near Fiesole. That would be life. But this—" Madelina ceased for lack of words with which to describe her opinion of the ancient seat of the Pirenza family.

"But this is our home, Madelina," said Cordelia, as much to refresh her own memory as to correct the girl's impression. "It is here that we shall live most of the time, save perhaps for a few months in the winter. It is here that all our work is to do. It is here that we must spend all our money—to make our own people happy and wiser."

"They are savages, these people,"



"My dear Cordelia,
I am the last person
in Rocca Pirenza to
know anything of
current history."

said Madelina cheerfully. "The con-
tessa will never civilize them. I know."

"At any rate, it is our task to try to
civilize them," said Cordelia firmly.
The firmness was quite as much di-
rected toward the coward in her own
soul as toward the cockney in Made-
lina's.

She sought to do honor to this occa-
sion of her entry into Flavian's own
house by arraying herself rather splen-
didly. It was an occasion—a great oc-
casion—and she must meet it fittingly.
She wore a bridelike dress of creamy
satin, and about her throat she hung the
milky pearls she had worn that night,
so long ago, when, once before, she had
made a particular toilet to signalize a
new moment in her relation with Fla-
vian. How was it possible that so
few months had brought about such
changes?

They dined in great state in another
room, the size, Cordelia thought, of a
king's audience hall, the coffered ceiling
of which floated away from them in
some high infinitude of darkness. The
wooden chairs on which they sat were
of the commonest sort—the kitchen var-
iety. Cordelia recognized them, and
recognized also their need of a scrub-
bing and a coat of paint. The linen
that covered the table was very coarse.
But the candles that lighted the meal
were set in holders of silver that Ben-
venuto Cellini's own hand might have
shaped. The dishes were of coarse,
heavy earthenware, the sort from which
peasants might appropriately have eaten
their noonday soup; but the wine was
poured into wonderful flower-shaped,
opalescent glasses from Venice, and the
food, in spite of the unpromising ap-
pearance of the cook, was delicious.
And Flavian, whenever he looked at his
wife, wore again that boyish look of
appeal for her sympathy, for her un-
derstanding, for her promise that she,
too, would learn to feel a pride in this
strange, incoherent spot that was the

home of his race. Her heart welled up
in response to that unspoken appeal.
She would love the place—she would
try to make it worthy to be loved.

"We should have come by daylight,"
he said. "I shall not forgive myself
for letting you see the old place first
by night—which means not seeing it at
all. Never mind, my Lady of Rocca
Pirenza! We shall have the place il-
luminated with electricity. It's the least
one can do for an American bride."

"The American bride can exist
without electricity," she assured him.
"Where would you get it?"

"The easiest thing in the world, as
they say in your enterprising country,"
he replied gayly. "The mountains are
full of streams running to waste—
power, power everywhere. We will
transmute some of that power into elec-
tricity. We will light the whole vil-
lage—it's a shame that we haven't done
it long ago, but there wasn't a cent to
spend on such things. Now, however,
I shall form a company. We will carry
our power a day's journey away; we
will sell it to the monastery of San Ur-
sulus, to the town of Monte Alevano.
We will show what the coming of the
American bride means in enlighten-
ment!"

"Won't it cost a lot of money?" asked
Cordelia.

"Ah, now that I have married an
American heiress, all the gentlemen
who would have nothing to do with my
plan a year ago think me a fine man
of business. They believe in my en-
terprises now—thanks to that fairy gift
from the old witch, your aunt! I shall
have no difficulty in forming my com-
pany. You have not tasted the liqueur?
Do you not like it? It is very old. Our
monastery used to be famous for it.
Our monastery"—he sighed—"was one
of the first to be suppressed by the gov-
ernment. It was forbidden to take in
new members, and the last one, old
Brother Lazarus, died four or five years

ago. But there is still in the cellars a good deal of this cordial. The monastery really produced a better brand of that than of religion."

Cordelia raised to her lips the tiny glass, shaped like the calyx of a flower.

"It is very delicious," she commended the cordial. "Fragrant, like a flower."

She set it down again upon the table. There was a resounding knock upon the paneled door. The old butler, who was hovering near, sprang to open it himself. Flavian and Cordelia looked toward it, astonished and waiting.

"Ah, Count Benedict!" the old servant exclaimed, and Flavian echoed the word, "Benedict!"

The man who entered was tall—taller, Cordelia saw, than her husband. He walked with wonderful litheness, with a sinewy play of muscle like a panther's beneath his evening clothes. His face, handsome, utterly insolent, was far more remarkable than Flavian's. Cordelia felt herself almost inclined to gasp at the sheer magnificence, the sheer lawlessness, of his look. At the same time she felt herself stiffening. Certainly this was an amazing intrusion from one who, only so short a time ago, had been in some dire stress of danger due to his own dishonesty. Did he suppose that Flavian had kept her in ignorance of the transaction by which he had been rescued from ignominy? Did he suppose she cared to consort with criminals upon equal terms?

"Do I intrude too early, Flavian?" Benedict spoke. "I could no longer restrain my impatience to meet my new sister." He turned his impudently admiring eyes upon her. "Ah! And now that I have seen her, I know that I have waited too long! Every minute was lost. Countess, sister, I kiss your hand."

Cordelia had not offered her hand. It hung limply by her side. But Benedict made nothing of that. He raised it, with his insufferable air of gallantry, to his lips. When he released it, it fell

limply to Cordelia's side again. She had not the strength to control it.

For the voice that spoke to her with easy, impertinent admiration was the wonderful voice that had arrested her attention only the night before, when the chief of the highwaymen had parleyed with her husband.

CHAPTER XIV.

She was scarce aware of the passage of time. She did not know how long after their fearful quarrel it was that he left Rocca Pirenza. Was it Flavian, her husband, Flavian, most tender and ardent of lovers, most delightful of friends, who had spoken to her like that? She only knew that she slept—or waked—alone in the vast bed-chamber of the ancient cardinal, the musty odor of the bed hangings half stifling her, all through that incredible night, after Flavian had so abominably cleared the situation for her. She only knew that, when she dragged herself from her room in the morning, out of the way of Madelina's inquisitive ministrations, little Signor Neri met her with the information that her husband had already started upon his journey to Naples again.

"Business of the architect and the furniture, as doubtless the contessa well knows," he explained. "Count Flavian would not have you disturbed for farewells; he feared you were too weary after the long trip over the Calabrian Mountains. It is rough country, ours, contessa, but you will forgive its wildness when you know it. He hopes to be returned in five days."

Cordelia listened rather with lassitude than with attention. The little man's eyes were boring holes in her, but she did not care. She was too tired to care for anything in the world! She was tired as if her body had been pounded. Let the whole horde read in her swift abandonment, in her heavy-eyed weariness

ness, exactly what it pleased them to read! They could all understand her situation more correctly than she herself—for they were all of the incomprehensible, barbarous race of her husband. Barbarous! That was it, as she had told him in that moment of fury last night—that moment of feeling so violent, so primitive, that she was frightened at the possibilities of her own nature, remembering it.

When Benedict had taken himself out of their presence the night before—she had been almost mute during the whole half hour of his outrageous intrusion—she had looked long and hard at Flavian.

"Will you explain to me," she had said at last, "if we are to live on terms of intimacy with that man?"

Perhaps her tone *had* been insulting—but what did that matter? What did anything matter? Before her very eyes her husband had changed as she spoke. His face, as she was afterward able to interpret the remembered expression, had been shamed, apologetic, conciliatory, until that instant. In a lightning flash it had become a mask of furious, dark pride.

"You ask me," he had said, ominously composed, "if it is that you shall receive a member of my family? Is it necessary for you to ask a question like that?"

Life ran in strong currents in her also—life and youth and the splendid arrogance of beauty and womanhood. She had always held herself at a high price—it was part of her woman's creed; and though she had rejoiced to be lavish of her gifts to her lover, to be even humble for love's sake, yet she was by nature proud. And she was untrained, undisciplined, by the experience of hardship.

"I ask," she had replied, and the sharp disdain had been for his tones rather than for his words, "if we are

to live on terms of intimacy with a criminal?"

Then the storm had broken. It had beaten upon her with violent words, flaggellating her. Her speech, her thoughts, both so much less swift than Flavian's, had seemed to fail her, had seemed to leave her all defenseless to his outbreak. It had been as if she struggled through a wild, unknown, shelterless country with a gale buffeting her, a storm of hail beating down upon her, bruising her.

It was not until afterward, when she lay alone in the great, canopied bed, that her scourged mind had tried to recall the meaning of all that fury. And how much had been made clear to her then! The lightning flashes of her inordinate anger, as she lay there, had illuminated a strange country indeed!

Criminal? No Pirenza could be a criminal! The insolent law, made for varlets and slaves, might say what it would, but no Pirenza was to be judged by it. What if Benedict *had* embezzled twenty-five thousand dollars committed to his care by some fool of a follower—some one of the base canaille—who had been caught in lawbreaking and been condemned to prison? What of that? Benedict had paid it back when the low fellow, emerging from the confinement in which it would have been better for him to rot to death, had called for it. Benedict had, of course, always known that he would be able to pay the money were it ever demanded of him.

How, she had managed to ask, could Benedict possibly have known anything of the sort? How could Benedict possibly have foreseen that his brother Flavian would be engaged to a woman who could supply such sum at need?

Flavian's eyes had burned furiously upon her at that question. She had felt that he hated her for the moment—hated her for daring to remember his need and her generosity, hated her

for knowing his brother's crime, hated her as the outsider, the alien to his heart, which protected Benedict as the comrade and the intimate!

"How could he know it?" he had demanded. "He knew that I would find it for him, that Antoinette would find it for him—that it would be found! And I assure you, madame"—he had spat the foolish, formal word at her—"that your gift was not the only possible solution of my need. You merely happened to have the opportunity to do a favor to the family with which you were to ally yourself!"

"I should, of course, be intensely grateful for the chance," she had shot back at him. "As the poor Jews ought to have been eternally grateful for the chance to help royalty in the old days by making loans that were never to be repaid! A thousand thanks!"

And then it had gone on, the tirade. She could not be expected, he had supposed, to understand what family meant, what noble blood required of those in whose veins it flowed. She could not be expected—neither she nor any other American, for they were all alike sprung from the canaille—to appreciate the loyalties of family. But she should at least learn to control her speech in the matter; she was to remember that she was now a Pirenza, that she would be the mother of Pirenzas, and she must learn to comport herself as a member of that race, should learn pride in its history, reverence for its traditions—

"And make myself an accomplice in its crimes, I suppose?" she had thrust into his passionate lecture. "Will you want me to go out on holdup expeditions with you and your precious brother?"

Why, she wondered, sitting before her untasted breakfast that lonely morning, had she said that?—She had known as perfectly and completely as if proofs had lain before her that Flavian was

no more concerned with Benedict's lawlessness than she herself was; she had known that there had been rage and fright and horror in him that night when he had had the testimony of his own senses to the fact that Benedict was a leader of bandits, levying toll upon travelers in the vicinity of his home. Such things, she had already learned from her guidebooks and from casual talk, were not uncommon in these wild southern mountain regions. But she had known that her husband was not his brother's accomplice. Why had she chosen that form of taunt?

At it, he had lifted a threatening hand toward her, words failing him, words being utterly inadequate to express his rage. And she had faced him melodramatically, defying him with level eyes. His hand had fallen and, with a choking sound of inarticulate anger, he had rushed headlong from the room.

She had not seen him since. Would she ever see him again? Did people go on with their lives after such upheavals? She supposed so! The poor wretches of these very mountains, for example—had not Flavian told her how, periodically, their homes were uprooted and their lives lost in earthquakes? And yet, the dread calamity past, they took up the task of making another home in the same place. They built and planted, they loved and married and propagated, as if they had never experienced the utter annihilation of their labors, as if they had any ground to hope that they would not experience it again. And so, she supposed, it was with these emotional upheavals that destroyed the fabric of the life of the heart; one bent beneath them, was beaten down to earth by them, and by and by one lifted one's bowed figure, and looked about with dazed eyes—and then went to work again, reconstructing a life of the heart!

Foolish, futile task! And yet she supposed that she would undertake it, like the rest. Those mountaineers, she supposed, when they began to build again, saw not the gashes and fissures and the devastating blackness of the destroying moment, but the rose beside the remembered door, the twigs ablaze beneath the pot of soup—all the familiar aspects of their old life. And she—Heaven help her!—saw, between her eyes and the infuriated face of the stranger who had shouted at her last night, who had defied her and defied progress, civilization itself, in the name of his ancient code—she saw between her eyes and that face the face of the lover who had wooed her, the boyish unhappiness and wistfulness of the eyes of her husband, entreating her forgiveness for the faults of long ago, entreating her love for his home! Perhaps to see that face was love!

"The contessa has eaten nothing," lamented the butler, removing dishes. "The cook, signora—is it that the cook is at fault?"

No, Cordelia informed him draggingly, the cook was not at fault; only her appetite. But that would doubtless return during the day.

She walked away from the table toward a long window that seemed to give upon a terrace or balcony. She found it to be a sort of tiled piazza, stone-railed, from which steps led down into what had once been a garden. She looked down into the disorderly, luxuriant riot of weed and flower and vegetable. Yesterday she would have been inspired to begin her work of transformation there in that very spot. Today she turned from it with a sense of the utter uselessness of every effort.

The butler was approaching her.

"The contessa receives?" he inquired. "Signor Nesbit awaits to learn."

It was as if some one had thrown her a lifebuoy as she struggled in a wild welter of billows. Eustis Nesbit,

safe, sane, kind, comprehensible! A man who spoke her language, whose language she would understand! A man who was practicing that profession of brotherhood in which she had been an enthusiastic amateur! Through her weary body a tide of renewing strength began to flow.

"Oh, yes!" she cried. "Where does he await? In the drawing-room? No, no! Ask him if he will come here, please."

She nodded toward the balcony; there were two or three lounging chairs there, a stone bench, a wicker settee, time-stained and battered. The mountains towered away on one side; on the other, the wonderful checkerboard of cultivated fields and orchards went primly downward to the valleys. There were people at work—one could discern them, strange, dark little figures bending at their tasks. It was human, it was real, it was not something hopelessly bound to a dead past! She would see Eustis Nesbit there!

While she awaited him, she schooled her face to express nothing but pleasure in seeing him, interest in what he had to tell her, casual acceptance of her husband's casual absence. Not by the flicker of an eyelash must she let it be seen that there was anything out of the ordinary in the fact that Flavian should have chosen to take a two days' trip back to Naples immediately after having left that city! Not for a moment must she let her features betray that storm through which she had passed!

Once she had proudly expected that never would she be obliged to meet the eyes of the world with a curtain before her own. Once she had magnificently intended that she would cherish no thought, entertain no experience, that all the world might not share, in so far as sharing was possible through the candor of her looks and words. And now she was veiling her soul, she was

teaching her brow to deceive! Ah, well, if women did not learn the art of concealment, and learn to call it a decent reticence, what would become of the social order? There was a new hardness about her mouth as she went forward to greet her caller—not even the smile of welcome could disguise it completely.

"You see!" he told her, taking her hand. "You see that I am a conscienceless man. I do not even leave you your first morning free. I remembered that you said you would come down to the school the very first day!"

"I am so glad you did remember," she told him. "If you hadn't come after me to lead me down with proper ceremony, I should have come searching you out. Had you heard? Flavian has been obliged to return to Naples for a day or two. He'll be exhausted. Travel through your mountains is not easy."

"I had heard that Count Flavian had been recalled to Naples on business," he answered in a colorless voice.

She shot a swift look of interrogation at him. How much did he know? How much did the whole household, the whole village, know of the quarrel of the night of their home-coming, and of its cause? She supposed that every one knew almost as much about it as she herself—more, perhaps, of its true origin!

"The Count Benedict begs that the contessa will receive him," announced the butler, shuffling over the dining-room tiles to the piazza, where she sat with Nesbit.

She caught her breath with a little sharp sound; the color mounted to her pale face; her eyes darkened.

"I am just going out," she replied.

"Forgive me, contessa," interjected Eustis Nesbit in English. "See him. I will explain later."

She hesitated, glancing uncertainly from him to the butler, who made no effort to depart with her message.

"And that I can therefore see him but for a few minutes," she added.

The old man shuffled away again.

"Will you explain now?" she asked Eustis.

"Later, if you please. Ah, here is Count Benedict!"

He arose and gave an indifferent "good morning" to the newcomer, who, very tall, very straight, very smiling, very insolent, bent above his sister-in-law's hand.

"You rested well, *carissima sorella*!" He spoke to her in English, but for the Italian appellation.

"Very badly," she replied tersely.

"Ah, the journey had been too fatiguing! And—where is Flavian?"

He looked about him inquiringly.

"He has returned to Naples. Did you not know it?"

"My dear Cordelia—since I have the privilege of calling you by name—I am the last person in Rocca Pirenza to know anything of current history. I overslept this morning disgracefully, and I have heard nothing."

"Do you sleep in the castle?" She showed her surprise.

"Of course I have my quarters here. I sleep here when I happen to be in this part of the world. Don't be alarmed—I am not going to be an intruder upon your charming *solitude à deux*—not until you and Flavian beg to be delivered from it! You know the Italian custom to allot an apartment under the parental roof-tree to each of the sons? I have mine here—two stories removed from the cardinal's suite where you and my happy brother mock the memory of the anchorite of our house with your blisses! My man, Sebastian, does for me entirely—feeds and clothes and robs me! Some night you will honor me by coming to dinner, will you not? You, too, Nesbit. But you say Flavian has set out again for Naples? Now, what the devil possessed him to do that?"

"Something to do with the architect, I believe," said Cordelia woodenly. "Will you forgive me if I leave you? Mr. Nesbit has come to take me down to see his schools."

"Ah, the good Nesbit, who does the things that we leave undone, we conscienceless Pirenzas! Do not let me keep you. And you have been long enough in Italy, in the south, have you not, to know how unwise it is to tempt the noonday? You will not subject yourself to too much sun?"

"I'll restore the contessa to her home by eleven o'clock," promised Nesbit. "That is my excuse for so early an intrusion—I wanted you to see the school in action before the midday heat."

Benedict, graceful, intimate, impertinent, as she felt, accompanied them to the portal of the castle. The dark stone corridors were clammy cold; Cordelia shivered as she passed out beneath the arms of the Pirenzas into the blazing sunshine. Then she lifted her skirt fastidiously and stepped daintily among the filthy cobbles.

"Tell me," she said, as soon as the shadow of the castle lay well behind them, "what you meant by advising me to see Count Benedict when I had declined to do so?"

"I am not quite sure, after all, that I can. I merely wanted to keep you from making an enemy—and a dangerous one. You will forgive my frankness?"

"Why is he a dangerous enemy? And why should he be my enemy because I refuse to see him at any particular moment of the day?"

"I do not know quite how to answer that latter question. I— Forgive me, contessa, if I seem to take unwarrantable liberties. You see, you and I—you and I—are of the same race, in a broad sense. And when I came here, I made mistakes, I misunderstood, I judged swiftly and according to my own English standards, and I made

much difficulty for myself and hampered myself in the work I had undertaken. It is presumptuous beyond words for me to imply that I can be a better guide to you in some ways than even your own—husband and his family. But it is true. I know how you will be impressed by many of the things you will see, for they impressed me at first as they will you. And to the others they are simply negligible matters—things that have always been, a part of the accepted order. So acquit me in the very beginning of impertinence and intrusion, will you?" He smiled down boyishly upon her.

"I thank you with all my heart!" cried Cordelia with the fervor of loneliness, the passionate gratitude of the hurt soul for sympathy and understanding. "I bless my fortune that you are here!"

He flushed a little at the ardor of her tones. He recognized their revelation of her mood, her acknowledgment of what had gone before to arouse it. But he answered casually:

"Thank you. Then I shan't mind being a fool who rushes in where angels might fear to tread. I simply had a conviction—to go back to our original theme—that Benedict would take offense if you refused to see him. And Benedict is the idol of the—well, the more lawless element of the population. I know you will carry your people in your heart, contessa. I want you to begin your life among them without the handicap of enmity from their—leader."

"Thank you. I understand and I am grateful to you. But why is Benedict the leader here, and not my husband? Flavian is the elder, is he not?"

"Oh, yes! But he has never come here much, and Benedict spends months of the year here—or near here. He's a great rider, a huntsman—I don't know the full complement of his attractions to the people, especially to the

boys and young men——" He stopped in obvious embarrassment.

"My dear Mr. Nesbit," cried Cordelia, with sudden recklessness, "please don't feel obliged to dissemble with me. I know a great deal about the source of Benedict's authority! You see—these are the filthiest roadways I have ever encountered!—we were held up below Monte Alevano. I heard the voice of the ringleader of that gang! I understand more than you think I do!"

"Countess, for Heaven's sake, do not be so indiscreet! You should not make these accusations to any stranger——"

"You are not half so strange to me as these people!" she cried.

Her face was working with grief, with nervousness. He looked down at her pitifully. He laid his hand upon her arm for a second with a reassuring pressure.

"I cannot but be moved and complimented," he said. "And of course—of course—I shall be faithful to every trust that you repose in me! But—it's such a bad precedent, don't you see? You mustn't go about saying what is in your mind to chance comers—you really mustn't! For some chance comer might not be I. And I alone"—he essayed a laugh to modify the seriousness of his manner—"am a deep well of reserves and discretions! You don't know how absolute the power of the Pirenzas is in these hills; the peasants are little better than serfs, peons, in fact, however the law of property, of leasehold, has been juggled to fit the needs of your family's exchequer! The syndic is owned, body and soul, by the Pirenzas. You must be—wise and silent. For your own sake, you understand. Will you promise me?" His manner, his voice, the look of his kind, tired eyes, were grave, urgent.

"You make me feel that there's a chamber of the Inquisition in my new home, and that I'll run the risk of ac-

quaintance with the most approved medieval tortures if I'm not careful!" She half laughed as she looked into his face, worried and insistent, bending toward her. "But I promise! I may let off steam to you, occasionally, may I not? Ah, that will be good of you! And—some way must be devised of keeping the pigs and cows and goats off the streets! And of collecting garbage—— Don't laugh! I mean it! And—— Are these the schools?"

They had come to a group of low buildings, built of stucco, yellowish and pinkish. A high wall inclosed them. Morning glories, blazing purple and pink, large as the lilies she had known at home, clung to the rough surface. Eustis opened a gate, and they crossed a little courtyard where a fountain played. Against the wall on this side of the yard, and against the houses, were geraniums, tall as the lilac bushes in Wheelville, and heavy-weighted, drooping lemon trees. The windows of the houses were shaded by Venetian blinds. The flagged path was spotless. Cordelia gave a sigh of pleasure.

"How sweet it is!" she cried. "How pretty! How clean!"

"Has that already grown to be your highest commendation?" he asked her, laughing. "Rocca Pirenza has begun its work upon you promptly!"

He jangled a bell, and the door was opened to them by a dark-eyed woman in the garb of a religious order. Cordelia gave a little start, but there was no time for inquiries. Nesbit was introducing her to Sister Theresa.

Cordelia never forgot the next hour; the charm, the pathos, of it remained vividly with her all through the day and through many more days. Within the mellow-tinted group of buildings on which the southern sun blazed so brilliantly were rooms still cleanly scented from new plaster and fresh wood. Windows looked out toward the high blue mountains—plenty of windows, regard-

less of the cost of apertures and incient taxes on glass! Black-robed sisters, low-voiced, amiable looking, taught groups of shy, black-eyed little girls all sorts of useful things. In New York it would have meant nothing, would have been a commonplace; there the cooking classes, the cleaning classes, the classes in needlework, the classes for learning ordinary things, like reading and writing, the exports of America, and the history of the world, would, of course, have been nothing. But here there were no schools for the girls—the taxes would not furnish them! The taxes, Cordelia told herself hotly, that went for the support of that picturesque army swarming over all of Italy, taking men from their proper work of providing for their families and themselves for two whole, fruitful years! Such schools as this one must be privately maintained, if they were to be maintained at all.

The children all seemed to her charming, even though there was a heart-breaking number of cripples among them. They were as charming, as vivid, as the bright-colored blooms of the region, as shy and endearing as little woodland creatures. There were "day" classes for the girls of the village, and the school was the home of many children from the surrounding district, some of them orphans, some of them intrusted to the sisters for their education.

"It's an awfully little thing," said Eustis Nesbit shamefacedly, when they had made their rounds of inspection and were walking back toward the castle in the blaze of sunshine. "Such a pitiful, little drop in the bucket! But I am glad you are interested."

"Interested!" Her manner implied that the word was too tame to describe her sensations. "And don't call it a drop in the bucket! It's a seed in the earth, which is a very different thing. But how dreadful—what a commentary

upon their whole system—that you, an alien, should be obliged to come to do for them what should be a part of their own life, the very fundamental part, too! And—your teachers are all sisters—*religieuses*? I did not know—" She broke off in slight embarrassment. Then she went on, a little awkwardly: "I gathered from Antoinette that it was not because you leaned to Rome that you had not taken orders in the English church, but because you leaned toward freethinking. And yet here you are, hand in glove with the Church!"

"Oh, I am not a Roman Catholic, if that is what you mean. But I am certainly not engaged in proselytizing for free thought, if that is what you call it. Of course I could have done nothing—nothing at all—unless I had religious backing for my enterprise. I hadn't the least desire to bring a set of little Italians into the freethinking fold! I only wanted to teach them A B C and the value of cleanliness and of labor—intelligent labor; I mean. They work hard enough, all of them, poor things! The Church, finally convinced that I'm not out for either converts or money, admits that the education of mind and hand is good, that cleanliness prevents disease, that girls who have an income in their finger ends are less likely to go wrong than those not so equipped. And there you are!"

"It's wonderful! I—I can't tell you how it makes me feel! It thrills me. But—Rocca Pirenza is so far from England——"

"Yes, I dare say that there is a great deal to be done in England. I know there is. But—I'm a muddle-headed person. I'm unconvinced about so many social panaceas of the sort we're advanced enough to want to try in England; but I have no doubts at all on the subject of the desirability of decent sanitation and industry, which were the primitive reforms for which this region was shouting. Besides, it happened to

be here that I was gripped by the need of trying to help in the pathetic struggle of our race out of darkness. So here I stayed; and here you find me."

"I'm glad of that, at least!" cried Cordelia heartily. "That I find you here, I mean. Will you think me dreadfully vulgar and American if I begin at once by giving you a check? It's so horribly obvious——"

"It's not nearly so obvious as you think! You've no idea the number of excellent persons who don't see it for a minute." He laughed as he answered. "But I don't want you to associate me in your mind with the banditti of the other night." Then he caught his breath sharply. "I beg your pardon," he added abjectly.

She was rather white as she bowed her head in assent to his plea for pardon. In the keen interest the little Nuova Sciola di Rocca Pirenza had aroused in her, she had forgotten her angers, her griefs, her shocks of astonishment.

"Good-by," she said, when they stood at the castle portals once again. "I shall expect the Italian teacher you are to send me to-morrow morning. And when I am a little more fluent with the language, I shall have my class in English for the ones who are going to emigrate—poor little souls! And meantime I'll send you the check. How much did you say was needed for a really modern infirmary?"

He told her.

"We can do wonders with four thousand lire—that's eight hundred dollars. But you mustn't——"

"It isn't much," she replied firmly. "In fact, it's ridiculously little when you think what it will mean. And I want to do it. You can't think how I want to do it! Good-by."

The shadows engulfed her, in her

slim, bright glory. Her footsteps rang light, but purposeful, along the ancient stones of the corridor. He stood listening to their echo, watching the last glimmer of her white frock. There was a new light on his fine, plain face—the face of a man overburdened with work or responsibility.

For more than ten years he had worked in Rocca Pirenza, overcoming all sorts of difficulties—the indifference, tinged with contempt, of the great, the suspicious dread and the contented, dense ignorance of the lowly, the doubts of the Church. Every step of the way had been a struggle; every penny he had spent had been collected at enormous cost of effort. He had journeyed up and down the country, he had gone home to England, begging, begging, begging everywhere, like a mendicant friar. A rather silent and inarticulate man, he had made himself over into a speaker that he might paint the picture of the needs of his people. And now, for the very first time, help was coming to him from the great pile that dominated the village, from the family that owned it. He had not expected that such a thing could ever come to pass; the most he had hoped from that family was a gay tolerance of him and his vagaries as long as these did not interfere with their own emoluments. And now a woman, beautiful as the Fra Angelico angel still dimly to be discerned in the forsaken monastery chapel, was volunteering to help him, was entering into his work and his dream—a woman young and ardent and tender-hearted, already kindled by the fire of brotherhood.

He drew a deep breath as if he were looking upon some glory of nature. And, all unconsciously, he bared his head at her door before he turned to go back to his rooms in the house of the doctor of Rocca Pirenza.

Appearance *and the* Ductless Glands

By Doctor Lillian Whitney

Dr. Whitney is always glad to answer all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health, but she cannot undertake to answer letters which fail to inclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope for reply, or to letters inclosing Canadian stamps. Every week she receives many letters of this sort, in spite of the notice always printed at the end of this department. Sometimes, even, the post office sends notification that letters are being held for her, which careless writers have posted with no stamp. If you have failed to receive a reply to your letter, you may know that it is for one of these three reasons.—EDITORS.

THE amazing developments in present-day human affairs are significant of one thing, at least, that we can be very sure of—keener and keener competition as the nations come into ever closer and closer contact. "Time waits for no man," and the laggard, the dilettante, the procrastinator, find themselves relentlessly pushed to the wall in the overwhelming onward sweep of even everyday affairs.

To compete successfully with others in the race, it is of extreme import that first impressions should be good ones, and so we find a greater individual interest in *appearance* pervading every grade of society; not so much the appearance that depends on raiment, but the atmosphere that radiates from and illumines the body, the impression of power that springs from centers under splendid physical and mental control. In this supercompetitive age, we all want to possess this appearance, for it argues fine mental capacity as well as physical endurance, and science promises us that ere very long we will all know how to attain it. On what are these promises based?

On the astonishing discoveries made in the field of the *ductless glands*. We already know what the most credulous would have laughed at ten years ago and we are daily learning more; yet

we are just beginning to realize the amazing influence of these glands upon the growth and development of the system.

Perhaps the most mysterious is the *pituitary body*. At one time, it was believed to be a relic of prehistoric man, a useless appendage, "relegated to the wastebasket," as one investigator remarks, "because its function could not be explained." This remarkable organ is not accessible, as it is situated in the cranial cavity, and for that reason many peculiarities to which it gives rise, when adversely affected, still remain obscure. Science is gradually clearing these up.

Thus, if the brain was removed, but the pituitary body not interfered with, it was found that all the functions of the body were normally performed except that intelligence was wanting. The pituitary, then, influences the entire organism. How?

It does this through its nervous connection with the adrenal glands, whose secretion, *adrenalin*, sustains life. Experiments with adrenalin solutions have caused the resuscitation of animals fifteen minutes after all signs of life had ceased, and have kept a decapitated dog alive ten hours.

Science wondered how oxygen is taken up from the air, and from whence comes the substance in the red-

blood corpuscles that distribute oxygen through the body. It is now known that it is from adrenal secretion.

These facts explain why some people are born tired, neurasthenic, averse to any mental or physical effort, why they are satisfied to vegetate, to let the days go by without achievement. These are they who are deficient in adrenalin secretion and in whom the pituitary body is doubtless in a low state of activity. The most amazing disease connected with disturbances of this organ is called *acromegaly* or *giantism*, but there are many minor peculiarities of the physique that we can attribute to slight interferences with the functions of the pituitary.

Acromegaly usually comes on during early adult years with an increase in the thickness of the fingers and toes, so that rings, gloves, and shoes are too small and can no longer be worn. It may not progress beyond this; if it does, changes are apt to occur in the face. The nose especially becomes broader, and the lips thicker; the bones become enlarged, the lower jaw even assuming the "hatchet-face" appearance. The teeth may spread apart; the voice may deepen. If the condition progresses, the bones elongate and there is a great increase in height; hands and feet grow larger. In many cases of marked stature, the strength may be prodigious, but there is no endurance, and muscular weakness with ready fatigue is the rule. The growth of hair—as well as individual hairs—is marked; very often the entire body is hairy. In women the eyebrows may become bushy and hair develop on the face.

These alterations are not always so marked as to be conspicuous, and as they come on very gradually, covering many years, no one but those so affected observes any great change. These physical transitions are often accompanied with a gradual deteriora-

tion of the intelligence. There is a want of initiative and a slowing of speech. Of course, if we were to enter into a study of more advanced conditions, we should find headache and changes in other glands—thyroid and sexual; but these slight, initial, everyday changes of appearance that cause so many heartburnings are all that we can interest ourselves in here.

It is well known that obesity of a certain type is caused by disturbances of the internal secretions, while on the other hand disease and removal of the suprarenal glands will bring about emaciation and death. So it is very plain that when this wonderful system is constitutionally below par, the fires of life are comparatively cold; there is very little energy, in fact a marked indifference to one's status, both commercial and social.

The greatest living authority on this subject believes that there probably exists from youth up a weakness of the suprarenal function in many individuals who are failures in life, upon whom time drags heavily, who yawn and, while averse to any activity themselves, find fault with Father Time and everything else in the universe for "going against them." In business these are they who are constantly watching the clock, instead of giving the matter in hand their attention; these are the unfortunates who never get anywhere. Science is gradually unfolding the reason why, and not only the answer, but the cure.

It has been established that the giving off of adrenalin to the blood is continuous and that it requires only one-half part per million of a centimeter to keep up the normal action. During each twenty-four hours, about four milligrams are given off to the blood—that is, every day this infinitesimal amount is all that the body requires to maintain its beautiful stability. The wonder, then, lies in the fact

that marked disturbances are not more common, and explains the frequency of slight deviations from the normal. The adrenal glands have much to do with the coloring matter; so it does not surprise us to learn that when they are greatly disturbed, there is a good deal of pigment deposited on the skin. Always in Addison's Disease—in which these glands are profoundly affected—there is a very great discoloration of the skin and the mucous membranes; but this is a rare condition, only mentioned here for its interest.

Surface pigmentation is of special concern to women, because there is so noticeable an increase of it in them during pregnancy, and often after maturity is reached. It would take too long to enter fully into the reasons for this, so far as we know them, but of one thing we are very sure—the chief action of adrenalin is on the sympathetic nerves, and woman's whole being is wrapped up in her emotions; the business of wife and mother draws heavily on her glandular systems, and it is only because she is so highly organized that she succeeds—often in spite of herself—in performing her life's work so marvelously. So she is a greater victim to these little external blemishes than are her brothers, and she is more disturbed by them than she is interested in what causes them!

Excessive pigmentation does not always yield to the usual treatment, but slight discolorations—brown spots, moth patches, and the like—can be bleached out by external applications, while the recurrence of these blemishes can be checked by stimulating the liver to greater activity and practicing a steadier control of the emotions.

Because the pituitary body is the regulator of all internal secretions, it naturally has a powerful influence on the thyroid gland, the secretion of which contains iodine and is as important to the body as adrenalin. Women



Pretty, but so apathetic!

suffer more from disturbances of this gland than men. It is almost always enlarged during pregnancy and sometimes persists as a goiter. Goitrous enlargement of the thyroid gland is very common in some sections where the drinking water is at fault. Dogs fed on such water develop goiter. Certainly the condition is extremely disfiguring, and no effort should be lost to reduce the gland to its normal size. In goitrous districts, all drinking water must be boiled, though it is advisable to remove from such localities rather than take the risk of developing the condition, as it is wise to bear in mind that a simple goiter, giving absolutely no trouble or symptoms beyond those of disfigurement, may at any time develop into a more serious affection—that known as exophthalmic goiter, for instance, in which the eyes bulge, the heart beats rapidly, and the nerves are irritable.

A treatment of simple goiter that has met with striking success consists in thorough antiseptics of the intestinal

canal—salol and thymol (in five-grain doses) and milk soured by the bacillus *Bulgaricus*. Ointment containing iodine are of great value for external application. The following formula is an excellent one because, with the aid of the glycerin, the tissues are more deeply penetrated:

Iodine	20 grains
Potassium iodide	20 "
Glycerin	60 "
Benzoinated lard	400 "

Triturate the iodine and the iodide in a glass mortar with the glycerin until dissolved; then gradually add the lard and mix thoroughly. Use no metals, but mix with a glass or porcelain spoon, and always make up freshly when required.

This ointment is also of great value for the reduction of *local fat*, and those who are eager to see annoying accumulations of adipose tissue melt away will avail themselves of this hint, though of course miracles cannot be performed with it. The structures should be bathed thoroughly with hot water first, to open the pores, then the ointment should be slowly, gently, and persistently worked into the tissues, perhaps twice a day. This advice applies to goiter also.

So highly essential to growth and development is thyroid secretion that children who are deficient in this respect are stunted both physically and

mentally. When fed on thyroid gland, they improve as if touched with a magic wand. Now, when, from one cause or another, this remarkable organ loses its efficiency in the adult, some very characteristic changes take place in the appearance. Perhaps a condition of premature senility follows, or a condition known as myxœdema results. In the latter case alterations in the skin are most prominent, consisting of a puffiness or doughiness, sometimes of the whole body, sometimes

merely of parts, with cushionlike swelling of the hands and feet. On account of swellings of the eyelids and lips, the face takes on a look of drowsy languor. The hair all over the body becomes dry, brittle, and falls out; bald spots develop; sometimes complete baldness ensues; the nails split and break off; the teeth are heavily involved.

This condition of thyroid exhaustion is oftener seen in women, particularly after the child-bearing period, which makes it all the more un-

fortunate, since this is the time in a woman's life when she is apt to have more leisure and greater freedom in which to follow her own inclinations, and this becomes impossible when she is handicapped, first, by an unattractive appearance and, secondly, by mental inertia.

Iodine is essential to life, but it is



One of the failures in life.

Appearance and the Ductless Glands

more essential to happiness, because, after all, life is worthless unless one has the inclination and the capacity for enjoying it, for getting the best out of it. No human being is really content to vegetate, and those who are only slightly deficient, as has been outlined herein, can quickly catch up with their fellows by supplying to the system the element it requires. Women, especially, should use more iodine, both externally in oils and ointments, and

internally through the medium of foods rich in iodine. The extract of the gland is procured from sheep, goats, and pigs; in this highly concentrated form it should be administered only under the guidance of a physician. However, a diet consisting of fresh glands and such other foods as possess an iodine content will go far toward making up for a thyroid that has practically ceased to functionate. A list of such foods is available to all readers.

Answers to Queries

CURIOUS.—Indeed, I do approve of facial massage. The woman who fails to give herself this attention after reaching the age of thirty will bitterly rue it at fifty. Directions would occupy too much space here, but I will gladly devote a paper to this important matter for early publication. Watch for it.

ADMIRER.—There is really no actual complexion "enamel." This is a misnomer. There are some French formulæ which, when expertly made and applied, certainly beautify the skin and have proven a boon to many. Would you like to have these formulæ?

DISCOURAGED.—I am truly sorry that you can get no results from the sage, iron, and tar hair restorer. It is extensively used with the most gratifying success. True, one must experiment if success does not follow immediately. Thus, in your case, perhaps less tar was needed or maybe more iron. However, the following tonic sometimes has a good effect in darkening gray hair:

Citrate of iron	2	drams
Nux vomica	2	drams
Coconut oil	1½	ounces
Bay rum	2	ounces

If at some future time you again want to try the other, full directions will gladly be furnished.

GLADYS.—A leaflet giving formulæ for several face powders suitable to different colorings is yours for the asking; also a harmless rouge. But do not use these unless you must for an occasion. A healthy pallor is far more attractive than an artificial bloom.

MADGE B.—There is a decided difference in bandoline and brilliantine. One is a hair curler; the other imparts a brilliant luster to

the hair, and should be used by every woman, especially on artificial hair. Which do you want—or both?

MRS. X.—The condition you mention is still called scrofula by many physicians. The child needs sunlight, fresh air, exercise, and nutritious food. A good internal remedy is sirup of the iodide of iron, because the system requires iodine and in combination with iron its value is increased. For your own "incurable" skin trouble, follow out the same treatment, and in addition use what is known throughout Europe as a "Famous Skin Restorer," directions for making which I will send to you on receipt of a self-addressed, stamped envelope.

HARMONY.—Your letter evidently failed to reach me. Bust reduction is an exceedingly slow, tedious process if you want to preserve the glands. Deep-seated massage, to break up the solid flesh, may prove very harmful. Gentle, but firm pressure by means of an elastic brassière, which also induces perspiration, has proven helpful. If you want to try the value of daily moist applications, send to me for directions.

MRS. FLEMING.—Skin specialists are taking up the cosmetic needs of their clientele more and more, just as surgeons are doing autoplasic work to improve the appearance as well as the health of their patients. I doubt if such deep pits as you describe could be successfully removed at home, principally because one so seldom pursues any line of treatment that requires time and patience long enough to get results; still you can have directions for the treatment of scars and pits if you wish.

Doctor Whitney will be glad to answer, free of charge, all reasonable questions relating to beauty and health. Private replies will be sent to those inclosing a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Do not send Canadian stamps or coins. Address: Beauty Department, SMITH'S MAGAZINE, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York.

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"My hair has quit falling out, my scalp itches no more and new hair is growing thickly."—**Mrs. J. Lundeen**, Multnomah Co., Oregon.

"After being bald 20 years, my head is mostly covered with new hair; am well pleased."—**Geo. Van Wyck**, Union Co., N. J.

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Machine Shop Practice | <input type="checkbox"/> DESIGNER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Civil Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> BOOKKEEPER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Stenographer and Typist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Surveying and Mapping | <input type="checkbox"/> Cert. Public Accountant |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FIRE FOREMAN OR ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Metallurgist or Prospector | <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial Law |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STATISTICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD ENGLISH |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marine Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECT | <input type="checkbox"/> Common School Subjects |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contractor and Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> CIVIL SERVICE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architectural Draftsman | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway Mail Clerk |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Concrete Builder | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Structural Engineer | <input type="checkbox"/> Textile Overseer or Sup't. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FURNISHING AND HEATING | <input type="checkbox"/> Navigator |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sheet Metal Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Penitentiary Building |
| <input type="checkbox"/> CHEMICAL ENGINEER | <input type="checkbox"/> AUTOMOBILE 1 |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Auto Repairing |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish |
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